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Why we cling so tightly to the thin blue line

OUR police force is under threat. Not from criminal masterminds or uncontrollable gangs, but our own government (see report on p11).

The austerity cuts which have hit every public service have left Kent Police battered and bruised.

It is nothing new, of course. Our councils have been cut to the bone in pursuit of paying back our national debt or as a result of a more ideologically driven agenda. Your particular political leaning will determine which you believe.

But they are the thin blue line to which many cling as a reassurance of keeping our communities safe and sound.

Because it is the fear of crime for the vast majority which drives our support of the police and our desire to see it constantly strengthened.

Of course, Kent is - in no small part due to our police force - one of the safest places to live and work and first hand experience of crime is thankfully rare. But that perception, and indeed reality, will be obscured by further reductions in police staff.

And along with so many public services which enrich our communities and individual lives, it is a crying shame to see our force facing such deep and painful cuts enforced yet again.

Of course, police and crime commissioner Ann Barnes' initial suggestion of a referendum on a modest hike in the police slice of the council tax would have eased the suffering and cost you and I very little. Just that her public image is now so in tatters, she would likely face a public more enthused about giving her a bloody nose than supporting our boys in blue. The irony will not be lost on many.

Have a wonderful Mother's Day.

Editor **Chris Britcher**

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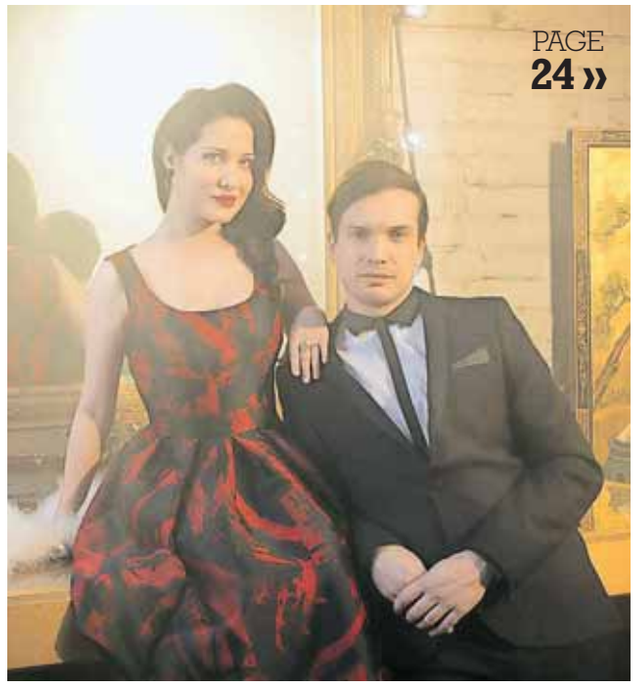

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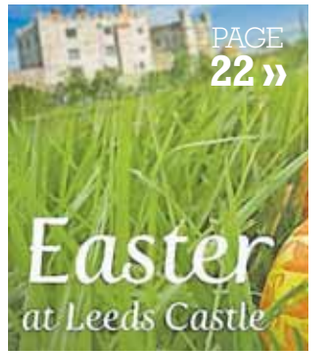

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Hunt saboteur comes to rescue of injured hunter

By Maria Chiorando
maria.chiorando@archant.co.uk

HELP: Hunt sab (face pixelated left) goes to the aid of injured rider Ian Hamson at Cowden

A HUNT saboteur came to the aid of an injured huntsman last weekend after his horse fell on him during a meet near Sevenoaks.

The drama, first revealed on our website www.kentnews.co.uk, unfolded at last Saturday's meet of the Old Surrey, Burstow and West Kent Hunt in Cowden.

Amateur whip Ian Hamson lost consciousness after falling from his horse which then fell on top of him.

Fortunately, on hand was a hunt saboteur who was also a trained paramedic. They had been there to try and disrupt the trail hunting, which they claim still risks harming animals. Fox hunting has been banned since 2004.

The saboteur is claimed to have assessed Mr Hamson's injuries, then stabilised him until the on-duty paramedics arrived having been called by other members of the anti-hunting group.

Lee Moon, spokesperson for the Hunt Saboteurs' Association, stated: "Well done to the sab who put his differences aside to act so compassionately, even in the face of hostility from the injured huntsman.

"His actions prove once again that saboteurs are compassionate not only towards animals but humans as well.

"This is another nail in the coffin of the Countryside Alliance's campaign to portray us in a negative light and it would be interesting to see what would have happened if the roles had been reversed."

Geoffrey Stovold, of the Old Surrey, Burstow and West Kent Fox Hunt confirmed Mr Hamson had fallen, and told KoS: "I understand that assistance was offered by a sab who claimed to be a paramedic.

"I am not sure how much assistance he was able to provide, only being equipped with a balaclava, camera and OS map. An ambulance was called and Ian was taken to hospital.

"Both the horse and Ian are doing well."

A spokesman for Kent Police added: "Officers attended Cowden Pound to ensure public safety on Saturday morning after receiving a report of a hunt demonstration.

"However, no offences were reported so no further action was necessary.

"While in attendance, a man required medical attention after falling from a horse and was treated at the scene by a first-aider."

■ To keep up-to-date with all the latest news from in and around the county, visit our website www.kentnews.co.uk, updated seven days a week.

Partnership deal struck to help pull hospital out of special measures

THE troubled Medway NHS Foundation Trust - which runs Gillingham's Medway Maritime Hospital - is set to benefit from a new NHS support team in a partnership announced by healthcare regulator Monitor.

The trust will work in collaboration with Guy's and St Thomas', one of the country's leading NHS foundation trusts, under new plans to turn the struggling trust around.

It was plunged into special measures in 2013 amid a host of concerns.

Now the trust has agreed an 'enhanced buddy' arrangement with Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust, which will support the new leadership team at Medway to improve the performance of the hospital.

The collaboration will involve a small and highly experienced team from Guy's and St Thomas' assisting the leadership at Medway to 'implement and embed best practice, strengthen clinical leadership and support the significant changes they are making to improve patient care and standards.'

Paul Streat, regional director at Monitor, said: "The new leadership team at Medway has been working hard to transform the hospital, and by joining efforts with experts from Guy's and St Thomas' they will be able to provide patients with the quality of care they expect. This shows how NHS organisations can help each other and share experience to improve healthcare for patients."

Health secretary Jeremy Hunt said: "This kind of partnership is very promising. The arrangement taps into the wealth of experienced, high quality leadership within the NHS, and will support the leadership team at Medway to continue transforming care for local people."

Monitor says it will continue to work closely with Medway and Guy's and St Thomas' to make sure the buddy arrangement is working well for patients.

Burglar who claimed to be Good Samaritan is jailed

A CROOK who pretended to have chased away an intruder, but who had actually burgled a house in Tunbridge Wells has been jailed for two and a half years.

On February 12, 2015, the victim returned to her home in Grosvenor Park to find a man in her house. He told her that he had been chasing burglars out of her house. She raised the alarm with a neighbour.

But when the neighbour went to look for the offender they found 36-year-old Simon Boughey, of no fixed address, who had items stolen from the house in his possession.

He claimed he had found someone else with the items and was in the process of returning them.

Boughey pleaded guilty and was jailed by Maidstone Crown Court.

Beatles legend Sir Paul pays visit to top public school

FORMER Beatle Sir Paul McCartney was spotted walking around plush independent Sevenoaks School on Friday - prompting speculation he might be considering it as an option for his 11-year-old daughter Beatrice.

While the school was keeping tight-lipped about the visit, students from the school tweeted out messages and photographs of the superstar being shown around by staff.

Beatrice is daughter of Sir Paul and his former wife Heather Mills. The couple wed in 2002 but separated in 2006 and divorced two years later.

Sir Paul, 72, who recently announced a UK tour, lives in nearby East Sussex. He re-married New Yorker Nancy Shevell in 2011.

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Crossing resurfacing for key Sheppey route

EXPECT disruption on the Sheppey Crossing later this month and into April as major road resurfacing work gets under way.

Originally scheduled for last November, it was delayed until now due to the weather.

Resurfacing on the northbound carriageway of the A249 starts at 7am on March 28 and should finish by 11am the following day. Further closures are likely to follow in April.

The carriageway will be closed between the Kingsferry slip roads and the Cowstead roundabout.

Traffic will be diverted along the Kingsferry Bridge while the work takes place. Motorists are told the diversion should not add greatly to their journey.

Train times slashed for high-speed services from Thanet into the capital

By Chris Britcher
chris.britcher@archant.co.uk

TEN minutes is to be slashed off rail times from Thanet to London on high-speed services - putting the isle on a direct fast link to the city in little over an hour.

The investment announced of Friday by the Government will see travel from Ramsgate to London on some peak time services dip from 71 minutes to just 63.

It comes courtesy of a £12 million investment funded by Network Rail and the Regional Growth Fund, which is administered by Kent County Council and provided by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS).

Outgoing South Thanet Conservative MP Laura Sandys said the announcement was a "game changer for Thanet".

She said: "This upgrade to our high-speed service is of enormous importance, opening up a whole new range of economic opportunities for our area.

RUSH: Services now even quicker

"Local residents told me that they felt left at the end of the line. We have fought tirelessly to change this. Journey times are now being reduced which will open doors to more investment and more visitors. This is a huge win for Thanet and will be a real game-changer."

And she rubbished claims by South Thanet Ukip candidate, Nigel Farage, that the investment was only made because he was standing for the seat in May and that the Government would do anything to endear itself to the electorate there.

Mrs Sandys said: "I am amazed but not surprised that some wannabe MPs are claiming that a three year process of securing funds for this upgrade were due to them. Obviously they do not know how infrastructure decisions are made and would be no good at making representation on behalf of Thanet in Parliament. Naïve and deluded."

Paul Carter, leader of Kent County Council, said: "This is more good news for east Kent. It brings east Kent closer to London, bringing prosperity and investment to this region. The Thanet Parkway Station will add further momentum."

HEAVY: Al Murray as Pub Landlord

Pub Landlord grounded in parachute bid

COMEDY creation and prospective Kent MP the Pub Landlord – aka Al Murray – was forced to pull out of a planned parachute jump into Kent on Friday after being told he was too heavy to take the leap.

The character, who is standing for the South Thanet seat for his Free United Kingdom Party (FUKP), then joked he was "a tragic victim of this country's obesity epidemic".

He had been due to leap from a plane above Headcorn Aerodrome before making his way to the New Inn in Sandwich as part of his election campaign.

In a statement posted on Twitter, he said: "It seems that I am too heavy to jump. It's a double whammy.

"Not only am I yet another victim of this country's obesity epidemic but also my life is being held back by health and safety gone mad.

"Gone are the days a British citizen could throw himself out of a plane regardless of the risk. Is this the country we want to live in?"

He added: "I vow if I ever get into power I will do all I can to remove much of the health and safety legislation that is holding this country back.

"I hope, however, this settles once and for all the issue of whether I am a political heavyweight."

Bishop of Tonbridge confirms retirement

THE Bishop of Tonbridge has confirmed he is to retire later this year.

The Right Reverend Dr Brian Castle has served in the role since 2002. He said: "It has been a privilege to have been in full-time, ordained ministry for 38 years with the last 13 as Bishop of Tonbridge. I will always be grateful for the love and support of my family and colleagues in ministry and for the joy of meeting and working with so many people throughout the diocese and in our link dioceses across the world."

Bishop of Rochester, the Rt Rev James Langstaff added: "Bishop Brian has carried a full share in the pastoral care of our lay and ordained ministers and has been constant in visiting parishes, schools and chaplaincies.

"In the period immediately before my arrival as Bishop of Rochester, he carried the oversight of the diocese as a whole."

A farewell service will be held at Rochester Cathedral on Saturday, October 31.

Push to make county breastfeeding-friendly

KENT County Council is looking for mothers to join a special support team after it launched a drive to make the county breastfeeding-friendly.

The council says the new campaign - launched today to coincide with Mother's Day - will help support mothers who wish to breastfeed. Leading the campaign is councillor, and new mum, Jenny Whittle.

She said: "Strong evidence demonstrates the positive effects of breastfeeding for mum and baby. We need to ensure that mums who wish to breastfeed are supported to do so. Mums know what is best for them and their baby, whether they choose to breast or bottle feed.

"We just want to ensure that mums know where to turn for help if they choose to breastfeed, as the early weeks can be exhausting particularly in getting baby to properly latch on to the breast. I know from personal experience that breastfeeding gets a lot easier after the early days."

For more information or to become a peer volunteer, go to www.kentbabymatters.org.

Award for cop team that slashed crime

THREE volunteer policemen from Kent who halved crime in their area have been honoured at an awards ceremony.

Special constable Ken Baker, special sergeant Paul Martin and special chief inspector Derek Moore won the special team of the year award jointly with a team from Sussex Police at the Regional Specials Awards.

The trio won the award for their efforts to tackle crime in rural areas in west Kent. Reported crime fell by more than half over a three-month period in the areas they targeted.

Inspector Jason Wenlock said: "The effect the rural specials team have had cannot be underestimated.

"Their presence has seen a sustained reduction in all crimes as well as offering reassurance to members of the public.

"The feedback received, not just about their presence but also their attitude and enthusiasm, has been extremely positive and the model is now being replicated in other districts.

"They are very deserving winners."

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agenda

What will make next week's headlines...

Trade unions organise major Ramsgate rally

A MAJOR rally organised by the UK's most influential trade unions will take place in Thanet next weekend.

The Rally For a Better Future, will take place in Ramsgate on Saturday, March 21, and will include speeches from the general secretaries of the likes of the TUC and GMB.

It is intended to promote a positive vision for an area which was highlighted as one of the south east's 'living wage black spots' by a recent TUC report. It is also set to be one of the most high profile battlegrounds during May's general election, with Ukip leader Nigel Farage hoping to become its new MP.

The event is scheduled to run between noon and 2pm with a high turnout from both inside and outside the area expected.

Big Weekend rush to kick off the big tourist season

THOUSANDS of people are set to flock to the county's top tourist attractions and venues next weekend as part of the Kent Big Weekend ticket giveaway.

Each year, in a bid to give Kent's tourism industry an early season shot in the arm, thousands of tickets are given away to those living in the county, organised by Visit Kent.

The hope is the they tell friends and family and recommend venues to visitors during the year.

Tickets for venues such as Port Lympne, Wingham Wildlife Park, Hever Castle and the Historic Dockyard Chatham were all available.

...also

Hear reasons for Green

GREEN Party candidate Stuart Jeffery will speak at an event at Canterbury Christ Church University on Tuesday entitled The Politics of Survival: Why Canterbury needs a Green MP.

It starts at 7pm at Old Sessions House.

War exhibition on Marsh

A SPECIAL exhibition on the First World War will get under way at the Kent Wildlife Trust Romney Marsh Visitor Centre from Thursday.

Organised by the Dymchurch & District Heritage Group it runs until April 12.

Marking end of Manston

A RALLY will be held outside Manston Airport on March 19 to mark the anniversary of its closure.

The event, starting at 6pm, has been dubbed the Monumanstonal March and will include the Kensei Taiko Drummers.

Rail services diverted

TRAIN travellers will face delays and diversions today (Sunday) as emergency engineering work takes place in the New Cross and Lewisham areas. Services from Charing Cross or Waterloo East to London Bridge and Cannon Street.

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Picking up the tab for cleaning up our roads

Just who should pay to tidy up our grass verges? **Jamie Weir** goes in search of some answers to an increasing problem

PRESSURE is growing for a blitz on the rubbish gathering on our roadsides amid mounting concerns it is deterring visitors from stopping in the county as they arrive at and leave from the Channel ports.

Not to mention the many people whose enjoyment of their towns and villages is being blighted by the problem.

The Highways Agency (HA), which is responsible for the county's motorways, says that in just one month, it collected 1,013 sacks of litter in Kent and Sussex alone.

The cost of that was around £40,000 – money which could have been better spent filling potholes, or on road safety measures according to the HA.

And it isn't the only group tasked with clearing the county's roads of litter; local councils take care of smaller roads, clearing rubbish which has been dropped by lazy motorists.

The A20, as a key link road from Dover to the M20, has been particularly badly afflicted by rubbish recently.

Dover District Council leader Paul Watkins says much of the waste is down to the volume of traffic travelling through the area - and is something he wants to see cracked down on.

> **"The cost of picking up litter should be paid for by government, rather than expecting already stretched councils to pay for the clean up themselves."**
>
> **Paul Watkins,**
> Leader of Dover District Council

He said: "There's no doubt in my mind the freight traffic coming into and out of Dover is the main cause of these problems.

"But this is a nationwide problem; it isn't just constrained to Dover. If you look at the roads and motorways across all of Kent, it's a serious issue, and getting worse."

So what's the answer? According to Mr Watkins, there needs to be a two-pronged attack against the litter louts ruining our roadsides.

He told KoS: "We need a concerted countywide effort by all local authorities to team up to tackle this issue. The districts need to come up with an action plan on how we can go after people who litter, and what we can do to stop them in the first place.

"We also need more national assistance. The cost of picking up litter should be paid for by government, rather than expecting already stretched councils to pay for the clean up themselves.

"The money could come from a levy on foreign truckers, who create much of the waste, to pay for litter picks."

While the A20 has had its share of litter, the problem extends into the Highway Agency's domain, stretching onto the M20 as well – used by thousands of tourists every day.

KoS reader Karen Rolfe works in Dover, but lives in Folkestone. She told KoS she's shocked at the amount of rubbish at the side of the road on her commute to and from work each day.

Ms Rolfe said: "It's outrageous that there's so much. I think when Operation Stack was in place, and there was so much standing traffic, it caused the problem to get significantly worse as the truckers didn't have any where to go.

"Even so, it's a problem which has been growing over the years, and I think somebody has to say that enough is enough now."

She says that the impact of litter blights more than just the landscape too, telling KoS that the economy could suffer as a result.

She said: "This is the first part of Kent which most tourists see when they come through the port or the Channel Tunnel. What kind of impression are tourists leaving the county with, if bottles of excrement, plastic bags and other rubbish are littering the first roads they see as they get here?"

Cllr Watkins agreed that the problem had been worse due to Operation Stack, but warned that even if a solution to Stack was found, the issue was unlikely to go away.

He said: "New lorry parks could cure some of the problems, providing that lorry drivers are actually willing to pay for them.

"The issue is that most foreign drivers, who I think cause the majority of mess, are not likely to be willing to stump up the cash. That means that even with new facilities, the problem of litter isn't likely to just disappear overnight."

A Highways Agency spokesman told KoS that, despite being more visible, the current litter problem wasn't necessarily any worse than it is normally.

He said: "People tend to notice rubbish more in spring than at other

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LITTER: Causing a blight on many of the county's roads

MESS: It's a countrywide problem says Dover leader Paul Watkins (above). A Highways Agency poster (left) about the cost of clearing up our roads.

times in the year. That's because road verges are normally clear of vegetation after the winter, with litter much more visible as people travel past.

"But actually, they are no worse than at other times during the year."

The agency, said the spokesman, worked through the year clearing rubbish across its road network.

He said: "We clear litter on our roads on a rotating basis, so will all of them are regularly litter picked. However, if people bring litter to our attention, we do also run ad-hoc litter picks on roads which are particularly messy.

"For some roads, a lane closure is needed to do these works, which can obviously be inconvenient to motorists, but we always try to make sure that we do it at night, when traffic flow is at its lightest."

For motorists sick of seeing litter at the side of the A20 and M20, a clean sweep of rubbish is on the horizon according to Cllr Watkins.

He said: "Over the next few weeks, we'll be doing a series of litter picks which should get the verges cleared up before the summer tourism season gets into full swing."

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THREAT: Is our police force facing a crisis? Inset: Ian Pointon

Fears funding cuts will forever change the face of our policing

Kent Police is facing yet another round of budget reductions - a move the chairman of the Kent Police Federation insists will leave the force in 'meltdown'. **Sarah Linney** finds out more about his fears...

FURTHER cuts to the Kent Police budget will lead to "the end of policing as we know it", a top police spokesman has warned.

Ian Pointon, chairman of the Kent Police Federation, which represents the county's rank and file officers, said another round of cutbacks would leave the force "in meltdown".

Kent Police has predicted that it will be asked to cut £61 million from its budget over the next four years – a figure which will not be officially confirmed until after the election.

And this week, it was reported that every police force in England and Wales is preparing for major cuts over the next five years. Sussex is axing up to 1,000 jobs, Bexley is appealing for volunteers to help their paid officers and Wales is putting adverts on buses opposing the cuts.

Sir Hugh Orde, the retiring president of the Association of Chief Police Officers, said he thought further cuts would mean the police could no longer protect the public – and Mr Pointon agreed.

"My fear is that more cuts will break policing in the county," he said.

"We are probably going to have to cut back both members of police staff [non-frontline staff], including PCSOs, and police officers.

"I could see 500, 600, 700 police officers going, out of 3,200. And that will put Kent Police into meltdown.

"These cuts should not be underestimated by the public. In four years policing as we know it will have been destroyed, and it will take a generation to put it right."

He says spending has already been hacked back so far that it is hard to see where cuts could still be made other than to staffing levels.

"They will cut elsewhere, but at least 80 per cent of the budget goes on people, and we have taken an axe to non-pay savings," Mr Pointon said.

"After the last £50 million of cuts, there isn't much fat to take away. If you get rid of police staff, their work still needs to be done, so police officers will do it. And their workloads are already through the roof – they are either at or beyond breaking point.

"Sir Hugh is not exaggerating. Nationally, it will be the equivalent of 11 police forces gone if this goes through. We are on a precipice."

He said further cuts would take officer numbers below the levels of the early 1980s – despite the changes in society since then.

"We won't be providing anywhere near the level of service we provide now," Mr Pointon said.

"We will barely be able to respond to calls, let alone do much of the other work that we need to do to keep Kent safe.

"You can't police the 21st century with the resource levels you had in the 1970s. Look at how much Kent has changed in the past 30 years, from the internet and mobile phones to the opening of the Channel Tunnel.

"I know he was a fictional character, but if Dixon of Dock Green was plonked in the middle of Maidstone on a Saturday night, he wouldn't recognise this country in the 21st century."

And he says the public need to take action if they want to continue to feel safe.

"People should be getting angry about this. It's us, and our properties, that are going to be vulnerable," Mr Pointon said.

> **"If Dixon of Dock Green was plonked in the middle of Maidstone on a Saturday night, he wouldn't recognise this country in the 21st century."**
>
> **Ian Pointon,**
> Chairman, Kent Police Federation

"They need to start writing to their MPs and asking them how they are going to vote on the matter. If people do nothing – nothing will change.

"It's no use paying down the debt if you have anarchy on your streets. If people are not safe, if they don't go outside their own front doors, that's a pretty heavy price to pay – to pay off the national credit card.

"It's nonsense that you can get more for less. You don't even get the same for less. Cuts have consequences, and anyone who says it makes sense is completely ill-informed."

He says he feels the service has already taken so many cuts that it cannot cope with any more.

"I think policing has reached the point where it needs to have a protected budget," Mr Pointon said.

"Crime last year went up 11 per cent in Kent, and nationally sex offences, fraud, violence, public disorder and shoplifting are up. And there's always the suggestion that people don't bother to report minor crime now.

"We keep the lid on burglary in Kent, but we do that by targeting prolific offenders. You need lots of officers to do that.

"We are spending more on overseas aid than we are on policing. We are paying aid to India, which has a booming economy compared with us."

However, Ashford Conservative MP and former front bencher Damian Green said that figures from recent years did not bear out Mr Pointon's fears.

"No-one knows how much will be spent on policing after 2016. All these figures are guesswork," he said.

"Police budgets have been cut by 20 per cent in this parliament, and at every stage the Police Federation and the Association of Chief Police Officers (Acpo) have said the cuts are putting our streets at risk, and at every stage they have been proved wrong.

"Crime has fallen in recent years. It doesn't appear to have been affected by budget cuts. And it went up at times when police numbers went up. There isn't a simple correlation."

He said the police could remain effective even with fewer officers.

"The police need to carry on reforming and reorganising in ways that will enable them to do their jobs more effectively. There's a lot that can be done," Mr Green said. "There are things that make their jobs easier and more satisfactory, and allow them more time to prevent and fight crime, such as the use of technology.

"A police officer walking down the street is unlikely to catch a criminal. But if the officer is equipped with the right digital device, with information and intelligence about what's happening in the area – what calls have come in, who may have broken their electronic tag – they will be on the right street at the right time.

"If they are wearing a camera, they can collect the evidence immediately. They don't have to go back to the station and transcribe the evidence and waste hours of their shift."

Efficiency mattered more than numbers, Mr Green said.

"You need an adequately staffed police force, but you also need that force to be run in a way that makes best use of police time. You could double the number of officers, but if they are all spending time filling in forms they are not doing their job effectively and the public get frustrated.

"I am very much in favour of collaboration between police forces – which is another way of releasing money - and also seeing how they can collaborate with the fire service, for example by sharing stations.

Perhaps not unsurprisingly, Kent's top cop Alan Pughsley was simply keen to get on with the job at hand and tackle the inevitable challenges head-on. The chief constable said: "Plans are already underway to implement these budgetary savings.

"By April 2015 we will have lost 483 officers and 634 staff. Despite an estimated budget reduction in the region of £61m over the next four years, Kent Police remains committed to local policing and frontline staff will be the last to be affected as far as we possibly can."

BARK: Crufts is seen as the highlight of the year for dog breeders and their pets

Breeders lack of surprise over Crufts 'poisoning'

It has been a week which the Kennel Club would rather forget, amid accusations of a dog being poisoned during last weekend's Crufts. But some Kent breeders say the news left them shaken but not stirred. **Molly Kersey** reports.

DOG breeders in the county say they are "horrified" but "not surprised" after shock revelations a dog may have been poisoned during last weekend's Crufts show.

The annual event - held at Birmingham's NEC - was shot to the top of the news agenda during the week after a three-year-old prize-winning Irish setter died shortly after returning to his home in Belgium after the event.

Jagger fell ill and before a vet could arrive died. A post-mortem examination discovered beef laced with poisons in his stomach.

A spokesperson for Crufts insists there is currently no proof of foul play but a major investigation is now underway as allegations are made that other dogs fell ill at the event.

But the news stunned breeders in Kent who took part in the show.

"I felt sick and saddened," said Brian Collins, from Ashford, who won best puppy with an Airedale terrier.

"Unfortunately it's not something I am surprised about. It's not the first time that I have heard of something like that happening at a dog show. It's not something that happens very often I must say.

"You could go years without hearing anything but occasionally you hear of a dog that goes off colour at a show and then a few hours later is okay. Then the suspicions are that someone has thrown something in its enclosure that has made it go drowsy or something like that. Maybe it was the intention with this one and it went too far?

"I would hate to think that someone would go to the extent of trying to kill a dog.

"The fact that the dog is dead and it happened at the world's biggest dog show has made it even more shocking. Crufts is the one that attracts all the public attention."

Richard Ford, from Chatham, was awarded in the second place limit bitch category with his miniature finscher.

He said: "I am horrified. I was quite stunned that anything like that would happen at Crufts, because people in general are very supportive of each other.

"You get the odd bitching and back biting but it's nothing serious. I don't think anybody that loves dogs and breeds dogs could do that to somebody else. I thought it was perhaps some dog hater that had gone to Crufts.

"My perception is that the poisoning of dogs has increased, with people leaving baited things in parks and places where dogs go.

"It's reasonably easy to slip something to a dog. As much as you try and keep them in your sight at all times are times when you turn around."

One of Jagger's owners, Dee Milligan-Bott, posted on her Facebook page that the timings from the autopsy suggest that he was poisoned on his bench at Crufts.

This is something that one Kent trainer finds odd.

"It's very strange," said Sue Wilson, from Tonbridge, who has won the reserve bitch challenge certificate with her spaniel.

"It's a complete one off. When you bench your dog you just don't abandon it. All the owners are side by side, even if one of the owners goes for a cup of tea they will be with one of the others. It's one great huge long bench, separated by a little wall and each dog has its own little bench, where you can tie your dog on a loose lead. These are in rows, that's why there's always somebody hovering.

"It's got busier, with more and more people.

"It was quite a shock to hear that that had happened."

Mr Collins added: "Unfortunately it's a reality and it's got to be something that we are all aware of.

"It would be nice if they caught whoever did it, but it's proving it isn't it?

"It's so high profile, there are thousands of people there. There are so many members of the public milling around, it gets very crowded. People come along wanting to make a fuss of your dog, understandably."

Jagger's co-owners Dee Milligan-Bott and Jeremy Bott have made it clear that they intend to continue in the competition.

They said in a prepared statement that they didn't think that the poisoning was the act of another exhibitor because "if we thought this we couldn't go on, and the last 30 years of breeding and showing beautiful dogs would have been a complete waste."

They have asked that people continue to participate in Crufts, rather than letting the "isolated incident" ruin their enjoyment of producing and breeding "gorgeous dogs."

It is a sentiment that is echoed by dog trainers in the county.

Brian Collins, from Ashford, added: "It obviously makes you cautious but you can't let these people win."

Richard Ford, from Chatham, agrees. He said: "The chances of this happening are pretty few and far between. I won't let anything like that ruin my life and what I do and how I feel, or you wouldn't do anything.

"I've been going for years with two breeds, we have been showing for ages. It's got more commercialised, it's a lot bigger but in essence it's the same show.

"There are a lot more dogs from abroad now because of the change in the rules, so its got bigger and more international but I don't think the flavour of Crufts has changed much. It's still a big occasion."

Caroline Kisko, secretary of the Kennel Club, the organisation which runs Crufts, said: "The Kennel Club is talking to and supporting the owner at this difficult time.

"Whilst there is a great deal of rumour and speculation and currently no evidence of any poisoning taking place at Crufts we are very clear that anyone caught attempting to deliberately sabotage another competitor's performance, particularly if a dog's welfare is put at risk, will face severe disciplinary action, which could include a ban on competing at all Kennel Club licensed events.

"Furthermore anyone who puts a dog's welfare at risk could face prosecution under the Animal Welfare Act."

CRUFTS - CELEBRATIONS AND CONTROVERSY

IF the FIFA World Cup is football's greatest showcase, then for the dog breeders of the world, Crufts is no less prestigious.

To win at the annual event is seen as the pinnacle of any dog breeder's career. To win Best in Show is seen as lifting the ultimate prize.

What's more, it is a hugely popular event, pulling in big crowds to Birmingham's NEC and commanding extensive coverage on Channel 4.

Organised by the Kennel Club, it boasts a huge trade show, and plenty to keep those crowds entertained with agility classes and competitions.

According to the Guinness Book of World Records, it is the largest dog show of its kind, having first been held in 1886.

But it has not been without controversy though.

Concerns over breeding standards endorsed by the Kennel Club - which some claim compromise the health of purebred dogs - caused negative headlines and saw a number of sponsors pull the plug.

It also saw the BBC drop its coverage of the event.

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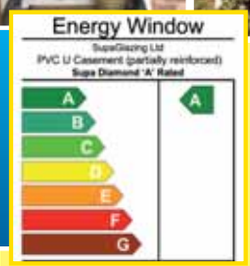

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SNAPPED: Kate greets the crowds and the cameras outside the Turner Contemporary

Artistic Kate is cheered on trip to the seaside

The Duchess of Cambridge proved a big hit after spending the day in Margate where she visited the Turner Contemporary and a local art studio. **Maria Chiorando** joined the crowds to greet her

HUNDREDS of people braved the chilly air to catch a glimpse of the Duchess of Cambridge as she spent the day in Margate this week.

Kate, who is expecting the birth of her second child next month, made one of her final public appearances on Wednesday before taking a break from her duties as her pregnancy nears an end.

And with vibrant blue skies and bright sunshine, she was warmly welcomed as she arrived, shortly after 10am, at the Turner Contemporary art gallery on the seafront.

A keen art fan - she studied the history of art at St Andrew's University, where she met husband Prince William - she was given a guided tour of the exhibition Self: Image and Identity.

Wearing a Hobbs dalmation coat - previously worn before in 2013 when she was seven months pregnant with Prince George - and her hair tied back in a ponytail she waved at admirers on the way in before going over to chat to them on her way out and be presented with flowers and gifts.

Westgate's Shahla Joiner managed to have a quick conversation with the royal as she came out of the Turner following her two-hour visit.

She said: "She asked me how old my little boy was, and what he's called. She also asked whether I've ever been inside the gallery, and said it's suitable for all ages.

"I gave her flowers - it was really lovely of her to come over and talk to us."

Amongst the other well-wishers was Peter Bailey who made the trip from nearby Ramsgate to catch a glimpse of the royal. He said: "We went to see the Queen two years ago when she came here to visit, and we're delighted to see the Duchess. We are big fans of the royal family, and are happy to have them as a head of state rather than elected leaders."

Among those waiting to greet her was Iris Johnston, leader of Thanet District Council.

Continues on page 16

Credit: ANDY JONES/ISLE OF THANET GAZETTE

TOUR: Gallery chiefs show their royal visitor around Turner

Credit: ANDY JONES/ISLE OF THANET GAZETTE

Credit: ANDY JONES/ISLE OF THANET GAZETTE

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Credit: GARY BROWNE/THANET EXTRA

Credit: ANDY JONES/ISLE OF THANET GAZETTE

Continues from page 15

She presented the royal visitor with a Margate Football Club scarf to hand to Prince George.

After visiting the Turner Contemporary, Kate attended the Resort Studios in nearby Cliftonville. The studio is home to a collective of local creative professionals.

She spent further time there, chatting to the artists before she was driven back to London.

A spokeswoman for the Turner said: "We were delighted to welcome Her Royal Highness.

"We were thrilled to have been given the opportunity to present our hugely successful spring exhibition Self: Image and Identity.

"Central to the exhibition is Sir Anthony van Dyck's remarkable last self-portrait which, following a major public appeal, was acquired by the National Portrait Gallery in 2014, the institution for which Her Royal Highness is patron.

"She very much enjoyed her visit to Turner Contemporary and to Margate. She met with artists from the exhibition and was able to hear more about our learning and outreach programme, meeting with local schools and our intergenerational group Blank Canvas.

"The visit recognises Turner Contemporary's position as one of the nation's foremost visual arts institutions and a leading example of culture-led regeneration which has put Margate back on the cultural map."

She was last in Kent back in 2012 when she visited a project in Wrotham.

ARRIVAL: Kate with Margate beach above, mingling with artists at the Turner and Resort Studios in Cliftonville (left)

Credit: GARY BROWNE/THANET EXTRA

Credit: ANDY JONES/ISLE OF THANET GAZETTE

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DARTFORD CROSSING: The crossing is a key local issue.

CANDIDATES

Full list of confirmed candidates:

Gareth Johnson (Con)
Simon Thomson (Lab)
Elizabeth Jones (Ukip)
Simon Beard (Lib Dem)
Steve Uncles (Eng Dem)

Dartford election will be a close call

Molly Kersey continues our guide of Kent's constituencies

WHEN you mention Dartford, it's hard to not immediately conjure up images of the always busy tunnel and bridge which forms such a key part of our traffic network; a key part of a town almost engulfed by the ever expanding London boroughs.

It certainly boasts some of the county's most significant structures, from the retail Mecca that is Bluewater to the high speed and international links afforded by Ebbsfleet station which lies just within its constituency borders.

The motorist too can jump onto the A2 for central London or the coastm and the M20 and M25 is on its doorstep.

As such, it has become something of a bellwether constituency - turning blue in 1979 with Margaret Thatcher's rise to Number 10, switching red for Tony Blair in 1997 and then switching back again in time for David Cameron's ascension to the throne in 2010.

If that is to continue, place your money now on David Cameron remaining as PM, given the size of majority currently held by incumbent Gareth Johnson who won the seat for the first time five years ago.

Labour's victories before have tended to be narrow and it is hard to imagine Ed Miliband has sufficiently captured the mood of the nation to make a difference this time around.

As with all other constituencies, the joker in the pack will be Ukip. It is just possible it could split the vote and leave Mr Johnson exposed. It's a big ask however and one many believe will be beyond it.

The focus, however, remains on the key local issues.

The High Street, like many others, faces difficulties and the town centre is in need of some regeneration - hindered in no small part by living in Bluwater's shadow.

After years of indecision, Tesco pulled out of their plans for a store on Lowfield Road recently, after shelving plans for a further 49 large stores.

It was hoped that Tesco's investment would have given the area a boost, bringing with it affordable homes, new shops and employment opportunities.

So it came as something of a blow when they pulled out earlier this year, sparking a political row between the Tory led local council and its political opponents.

Conservative MP Gareth Johnson said: "I will continue to work with the council to ensure we get the right deal for our town."

Simon Thomson, Labour parliamentary candidate, said: "They should have had a plan B , it was obvious Tesco wasn't going to be built.

"People are desperate for a place to hang out, an attractive, vibrant place in the town centre.

"We could be doing far more to regenerate Dartford town centre. There are a lot of empty premises.

"You could easily say to young people, entrepeneurs, start ups - see how you go and we'll give you a helping hand. That's how the Pret A Mangers of tomorrow start.

"Dartford will never get the big shops back, they have gone to Bluewater.

"Dartford has got a lot going for it. It's got the river, the rail links. I want to see Dartford improve its image and outreach and get companies in the town centre, and companies to come back to Dartford."

Ukip's candidate Elizabeth Jones added: "The electorate has informed us that there is insufficient fun, that perhaps a bowling alley, and coffee and cake shops could bridge that gap.

"Dartford needs to become a hub of industry, skills, and artisan works to give people a real economic future and attract visitors, with a view to attracting start-up concepts, such as Old Street Silicon Roundabout and Croydon Tech City."

She added: "The site requires a master plan to be drawn up by a planning summit between the land owners, interested developers, and the people of Dartford.

"Retail should include plenty of scope for small shops, similar to Richardson's butchers, a farmers' market, and plenty of free parking."

And there are plenty of other key issues for the candidates to be discussing on the door step.

National issues such as the threat of NHS privatisation have had a trickle down effect, with concerns raised by residents about the waits, access and parking charges at Darent Valley Hospital.

"Getting the economy right is imperative as it is at the heart of everything we do and a strong economy means more doctors and nurses at Dartford's Darent Valley Hospital as well as continuing investment into our local schools," said MP Mr Johnson.

Add to this issues such as the cost of living and train fares and there is plenty to sway an uncertain voter.

The Dartford Crossing is something which has also been brought to the attention of the candidates.

Especially as at some point after the election dust has settled, a decision will be made as to the location of the next Thames crossing - one which will either sit alongside the existing QE11 Bridge or be sited east of neighbouring Gravesend.

Mr Johnson explained: "It has been an issue for voters for years and this election is no different. At the moment we are seeing significant changes to the way the existing crossing is operated with the introduction of the 'free flow' system.

CONFIDENT: Ukip's Elizabeth Jones and Conservative MP Gareth Johnson

PREVIOUS RESULTS

Past general election results for Dartford:

2010

Gareth Johnson (Con)- 24,428 (48.8%)
John Adams (Lab)- 13,800 (27.6%)
James Willis (Lib Dem)- 7,361 (14.7%)
Gary Rogers (Eng Dem)- 2,178 (4.3%)
Richard Palmer (Ukip)- 1,842 (3.7%)
Stephane Tindame (Independent)- 264 (0.5%)
Ernie Crockford (Fancy Dress Party)- 207 (0.4%)

Majority: 10,628 (21%)

2005

Howard Stoate (Lab)- 19,909 (42.6%)
Gareth Johnson (Con)- 19,203 (41.1%)
Peter Bucklitsch (Lib Dem)- 5,036 (10.8%)
Mark Croucher (Ukip)- 1,407 (3%)
Michael Tibby (New England)- 1,224 (2.6%)

Majority: 706 (1.5%)

HOPEFUL: Simon Thomson

Continued on Page 20

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"We have already seen improvements to traffic jams and I am looking forward to seeing further improvements to congestion when the new system is fully operational later in the year."

Many claim the impact of the booth-free crossing should be examined before any future crossing is agreed, although it is hard not to argue that something needs to be done...somewhere.

Labour's Mr Thomson agrees the crossing is a concern for people in the constituency.

He believes that any further developments should happen elsewhere.

He said: "Getting Dartford moving is a huge local issue.

"The next crossing has to be built away from Dartford.

"There may be a case for another crossing across the Thames. But it should not be built at Dartford. Dartford suffers pollution and congestion every time there's a problem at the crossing or the bridge and people have had enough of it."

This year, the candidates believe it is all to play for.

Mr Johnson said: "This will be a very close election and therefore it will capture people's interest."

Labour's Simon Thomson said: "I think politicians can be very out of touch, particularly those in safe seats. They get cocooned in Westminster and have a job for life.

"For me it's about outreach, that's why I wanted to stand.

"Call me idealistic but I am trying my best and the only way to do that is by getting involved."

Ukip's Elizabeth Jones said: "We are quietly confident about our prospects in Dartford."

English Democrats' candidate Steve Uncles added: "Dartford is an area that we have been campaigning in for over 10 years and last time we beat Ukip.

"We hope to have a reasonable performce."

KOS PREDICTS...

AS with previous elections in Dartford, the Tories and Labour are the main contenders this year but Ukip could derail either's plans.

Only then is it feasible to see past Gareth Johnson being returned to Westminster.

Labour will certainly look to fight hard and could spring a surprise. But it will be a long shot and only the very bravest would take a wager on Simon Thomson securing this seat for Ed Miliband.

Crouch a tiger over hidden Osborne?

By Molly Kersey
molly.kersey@archant.co.uk

CREATED in 1997, the constituency of Chatham and Aylesford was created after the Mid Kent seat was abolished and from it the new zone formed, incorporating parts too from Tonbridge and Malling.

At the centre of the on-going redevelopment and rejuvenation of the Medway towns, it still has an engineering heartbeat harking back to its days as home of the famous dockyard - now a major tourist attraction, events venue and occasional film set.

in 2010, the personable Tracey Crouch,

CONFIDENT: Conservative MP Tracey Crouch.

wrestled the seat off Labour's Jonathan Shaw with a 6,000-strong majority. Like Dartford, it's hard to see Labour make the leap this time around, despite the high profile local candidate it is fielding. And, once again, it may prove to be that Ukip plays a significant role in the outcome - especially given its win in neighbouring Rochester & Strood just a few months ago.

Not that Labour think they have a look in.

"It's a two horse race," said Labour's Tristan Osborne, who will also be campaigning as part of the party's push for the unitary Medway Council - all seats for which are also up for grabs in May.

Labour chiefs have, as a consequence, described May 7 as one of the most important days for democracy Medway has ever seen.

"It's perfectly possible Labour could win. It's a target seat for us, we are fighting every single council ward very hard and we fully expect to secure a majority. We are out to win it."

Ms Crouch is also confident about the election.

She said: "I am really looking forward to it. I think it's going to be interesting. I have worked incredibly hard for the last five years which I think people recognise, and I have been a strong voice in Westminster for the constituency. I have certainly been getting positive responses on the door step."

The possible party pooper for both, however, is Ukip's Ian Wallace.

He said: "I think there's a national swing to alternative politics, with Ukip being a bit of a predominant choice."

So what are the key issues that are currently affecting people in the constituency?

Ms Crouch explained: "I think people are concerned with issues such as immigration and health care, and want to see continuing growth in the economy.

"I think it's a site that is relatively close to London so there are issues around rail fares and jobs and long term economic security for people."

Green parliamentary candidate

CANDIDATES

Full list of confirmed candidates:

Tracey Crouch (Con)
Ian Wallace (Ukip)
Tristan Osborne (Lab)
Richard Andrzejak (TUSC)
Luke Balnave (Green)
James Gibson (CPA)

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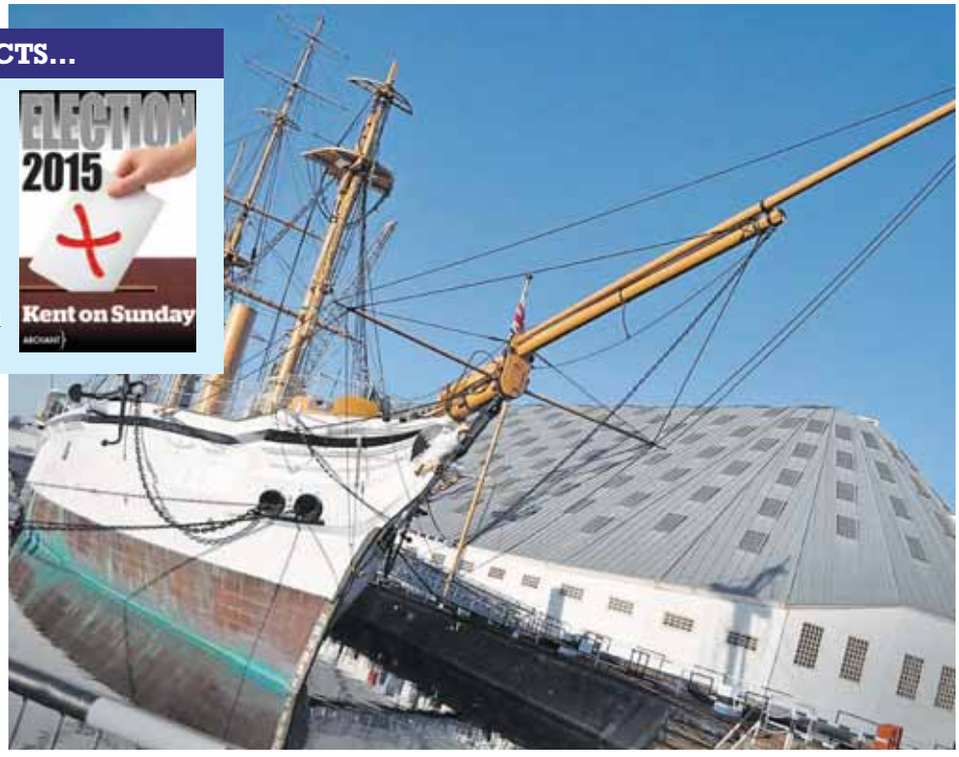
KOS PREDICTS...

TRACEY Crouch has gone from unknown to popular figure during her five years as MP and that is likely to be the deciding factor in this seat.

Certainly Labour has a chance, and the party is well organised and vocal in Medway.

It may, however, have to rely on Ukip stealing a big chunk of traditional Tory voters if it has real hopes of taking the seat back.



UNCERTAIN: The constituency of Chatham and Aylesford has been a Labour and Conservative seat since 1997.

Luke Balnave added: "There are issues with housing. There are insufficient homes in Medway currently that people can afford to live in. I oppose development where the profits of the developer come before the needs of Medway people.

"Those issues are fundamental to people's lives."

Richard Andrzejak, of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, said: "There's a massive amount of commuters from Medway. Fares aren't going down and the service isn't getting any better either. We want to see those profits going back into the service rather than to the share holders."

The Medway Maritime Hospital is also an issue that has been raised. It was placed into special measures in 2013 and remains a cause for concern.

Mr Osborne explained: "The NHS I would say is the number one issue; people not getting access to GPs surgeries and the state of the Medway Maritime Hospital in the Chatham side of the constituency.

"We are committed to more staff and the safe guarding of Medway Maritime in the public sector."

A damning report listed a catalogue of failings at the hospital which included staffing levels being so low they were potentially unsafe and an A&E department where staff were struggling to cope.

Ms Crouch said: "It's going to be subject to ongoing work and scrutiny. It was always going to take a significant amount of time."

Ukip's Ian Wallace thinks that certain improvements could help to put the area on the map and stimulate economic growth, creating more jobs.

"Aylesford is obviously quite affluent. But there's areas that seem slightly deprived," he said. "We have got a fantastic river that can open up all sorts of things to do with tourism.

"People need to feel that they are really proud to come from what was a great naval dockyard."

PREVIOUS RESULTS

Past general election results for Chatham & Aylesford:

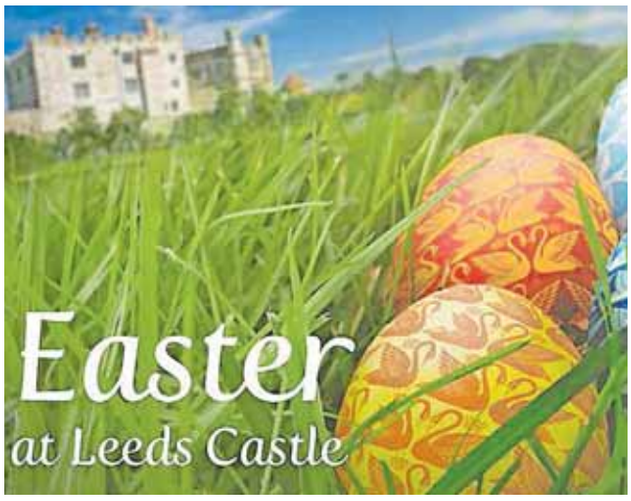
2010
Tracey Crouch (Con) - 20, 230 (46.2%)
Jonathan Shaw (Lab) - 14,161 (32.3%)
John McClintock (Lib Dem) - 5,832 (13.3%)
Colin McCarthy-Stewart (BNP) - 1,365 (3.1%)
Steve Newton (Ukip) - 1,314 (3%)
Sean Varnham (Eng Dem) - 400 (0.9%)
Dave Arthur (Green) - 396 (0.9%)
Maureen Smith (Christian) - 109 (0.2%)
Majority: 6,069 (13.9%)

2005
Jonathan Shaw (Lab) - 18,387 (43.7%)
Anne Jobson (Con) - 16,055 (38.2%)
Debbie Enever (Lib Dem) - 5,744 (13.7%)
Jeffrey King (Ukip) - 1,226 (2.9%)
Michael Russell (Eng Dem) - 668 (1.6%)
Majority: 2,332 (5.5%)

DETERMINED: Labour's Tristan Osborne.

Easter 'Egg-citement' at Leeds Castle this April

COMPETITION: We have teamed up with 'the loveliest castle in the world' to offer readers the chance to win family tickets (valid for 12 months) to the attraction. To enter, read on...



SPRING will soon be in bloom at Leeds Castle, near Maidstone and there are a variety of colourful activities coming up for the whole family within the 500-acre estate.

From April 2 to 19, keep the children amused during the Easter school holidays with the Leeds Castle Easter Trails.

Discover nine hidden Easter eggs as you follow a traditional trail through the Woodland Walk. In spring, the Wood Garden alongside the River Len is a particularly lovely way to approach the castle.

Its carpet of daffodils, narcissi and anemones presents a vibrant burst of colour. This trail costs £1 per child including a chocolate prize.

Across the rest of the estate, past the magnificent entrance to the castle and up towards the maze, circus-themed characters will be hidden ready to be discovered.

Once you have found the circus characters, break the code to be rewarded with a chocolate prize. Costs £1 per child (entrance ticket also required for both trails).

From Good Friday to Easter Monday (April 3-6), there is even more Easter family fun as Baldwin the Fool and Godfrey Pugh bring jester juggling jollity to the castle.

Be taken back to days of jesters and nights of... knights. Where comedy was uncomplicated and the comedians were simple.

Children can learn a variety of circus skills and our jesters will demonstrate stilt walking and perform juggling shows for the whole family to enjoy. For a small additional charge, have your face painted and try to hit the target by having a go at archery.

During your visit to Leeds Castle, indulge in some retail therapy and call into our shops. Take home a delicious range of Easter treats including bags of mini eggs, decorations and pocket money chocolate bunnies.

For the whole of the Easter holidays, there will be Easter egg decorating for children in the 17th century Fairfax Restaurant, daily from 3pm. Costs £2 per child, which includes materials.

During your visit, discover delicious treats throughout your day at Leeds Castle this Easter weekend.

Spoil yourself by pre-booking a light and delicious afternoon tea in the Maiden's Tower, priced at £15 per person.

A tasty two course Easter lunch will also be served in the Tudor Maiden's Tower, adjacent to the Castle, priced at £19.95 per person.

For an evening Easter treat, pre-book a table at The Great British Kitchen. From April 3-6, feast on seasonal Spring lamb followed by our chef's speciality Easter Egg chocolate torte. Prices range from £18.95 per person for two courses and a drink to £24.95 per person for three courses and a drink.

Pre-book our Easter dining events by calling 01622 767777 or by visiting www.leeds-castle.com/restaurant.

A valid entrance ticket to Leeds Castle is required for this event. Annual tickets cost £24 for adults; £21 for seniors and visitors with disabilities (carer goes free); £16 for children (under 4's free). Annual tickets are valid for 12 months (but not for special ticketed events) so you can pay once and visit all year round. Pre-book online before you visit and save 10%.

Leeds Castle is near Maidstone in Kent just off Junction 8 of the M20 and only one hour's drive from London. Grounds open at 10am daily and the castle is open from 10.30am. Last admission is 4.30pm. Gates close at 6pm.

To win one of five family tickets, answer the following question: The Easter fun includes jesters, knights and a fool, what is his name?
A) Brad
B) Baldrick
C) Baldwin

■ To enter, text KOS followed by Eggcitement and your answer then your first name, surname address and postcode to 80058, e.g. KOS Eggcitement C JOHN SMITH 2 THE STREET, TOWN, DV2 2GT. Texts cost 50p plus your standard network rate. Winners will be selected from all correct entries. Promoter's decision is final.

Usual terms and conditions apply. Please note if you should enter after the closing deadline of Tuesday March 24, 2015, your entry will not be valid, but you still may be charged. SMS services are provided by BBA Digital Helpline Telephone 0844 3572403.

Or enter by post to Leeds Castle Easter Competition, Archant KOS Media, Suite 104 Kent House, Station Road, Ashford, Kent TN23 1PP with your answer, name, address, postcode and telephone number.

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‘Sinkhole’ opens in town square

Homes and traders forced to move out after hole appears in Gravesend street. **Sarah Linney** reports

FAMILIES had to be moved out of a Gravesend street last week after a hole suddenly opened up in the road.

And such is the scale of the problem for some, they may not be able to return to their homes until the end of the year.

Seven council tenants in Lawrance Square, Coldharbour, Northfleet, have had to be rehoused by Gravesham Borough Council as a result of the subsidence.

Traders on one side have also been told they should shut up shop on safety grounds - although many are continuing, determined not to miss out on much needed trade.

Denise Locker said her daughter Donna Harvey had been told she and her two children could be displaced for between six and nine months.

Ms Harvey is to be moved to a two-bedroom bungalow nearby, but will have to stay with Ms Locker for at least three weeks while the council gets it ready.

“There are elderly people who have been here for 20 years,” Ms Locker said. “It is a really upsetting situation and we still don’t know the cause of it.”

The council had to call on an independent surveyor, who confirmed that the area was dangerous and the block of homes was at risk, after the hole opened up on one side of the shops, fracturing a sewer.

MYSTERY: Huge hole appeared in Lawrance Square

The shops were advised to close and the tenants were told not to drink the tap water – an instruction which has also been given to people living in nearby streets, although there is no suggestion that they will have to move.

Ward councillor Shane Mochrie-Cox said: “We are working on temporary accommodation for the businesses, but we need to find out exactly what they need.

“We are waiting for the professionals to come and tell us exactly what it is. It could be a drain that’s been leaking and caused a bit of subsidence, or a sinkhole. We live in a very chalky county, so things like this happen quite often around Kent.”

A council spokesman said all but one tenant had moved out of the flats.

“All the tenants have been offered temporary accommodation and will be rehoused while the works are carried out,” the spokesman said.

“It is not known how long the work will take until further investigations are completed.

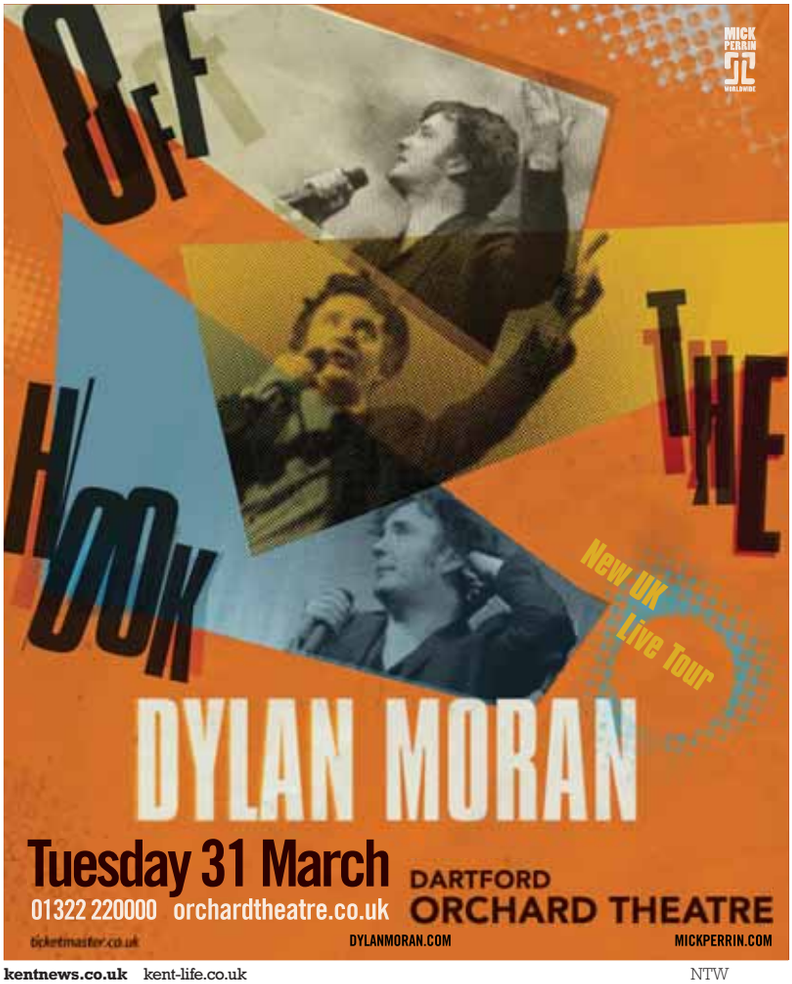
“Tenants have been advised at every stage of the process. Removals and reconnection to utilities have been arranged by the council.

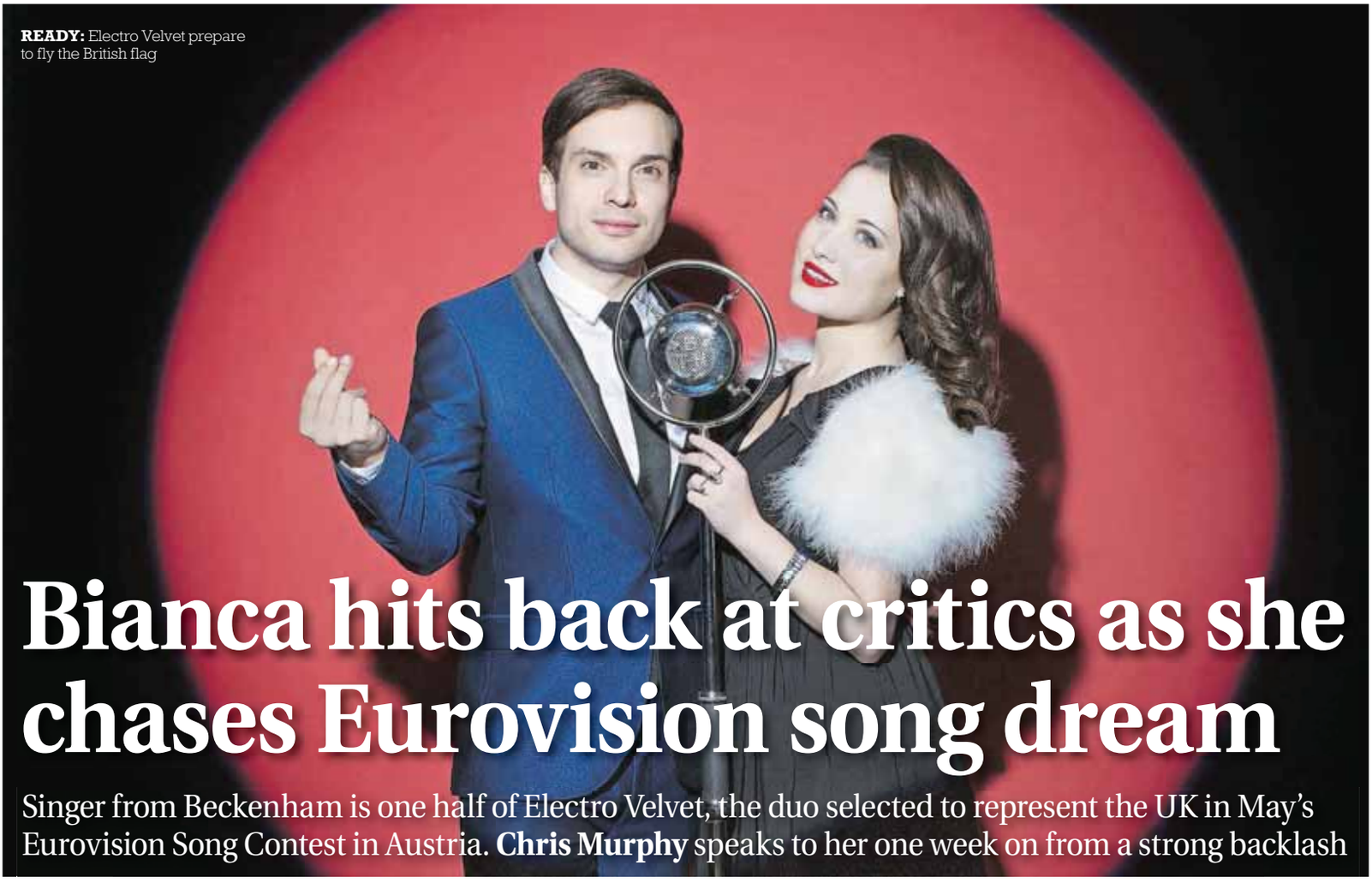
“We are looking at ways to help the shops start trading again as soon as possible.”

The tenant who has not moved has been offered several alternative accommodation options and the council says it is continuing to try to find somewhere where she is happy to go.

Cabinet member for housing and ward councillor Sue Howes said: “We have made every effort to help people. We understand some did not want to move, but we cannot allow people to remain in homes at risk from potential subsidence and that are now without basic services.”

DISPLACED: Families on the move





READY: Electro Velvet prepare to fly the British flag

Bianca hits back at critics as she chases Eurovision song dream

Singer from Beckenham is one half of Electro Velvet, the duo selected to represent the UK in May's Eurovision Song Contest in Austria. **Chris Murphy** speaks to her one week on from a strong backlash

EUROVISION hopeful Bianca Nicholas says she is unphased by criticism for the UK's entry for this year's song contest and insists her group could still spring a surprise.

The Beckenham singer is part of the Electro Velvet duo who were unveiled last weekend as our entry in the 60th anniversary edition of the Eurovision Song Contest.

But the critical reception for I'm Still In Love With You has been fierce on occasion, with the Guardian running an article asking if it is the UK's "worst Eurovision entry ever". And that is up against some pretty tough opposition.

Others, however, have started to warm to the catchy tune.

Any hopes of success when the event is held in Austria next month are a long shot however. The UK has performed appallingly in recent years and the bookmakers rank its chances of coming last higher than of winning.

Not that Ms Nicholas, who suffers from cystic fibrosis and once appeared on the BBC's The Voice talent show, is allowing herself to lose hope.

She told KoS: "We really are quite over the moon about going to Austria – the song is electro swing and I am not sure the UK has ever had an entry like it.

"There are so many ballads among the other entries this year," she said. "It is the 60th anniversary of the show, this is a party year and we have got an upbeat sound, it's a party song and we will deliver it with everything we have.

"You never know what's going to happen, there are so many factors in how well a song does. One thing we can say for certain is that we absolutely want it. We will be trying our best."

Her Electro Velvet partner is Alex Larke. He normally makes his living impersonating Mick Jagger in a Rolling Stones tribute act.

After they were selected, they had to keep the news secret from her family for six weeks.

She added: "They are so excited. Everyone is so happy for me – I am getting so many messages from so many different people."

The pair got together via mutual friend David Mindel, a song writer whose previous 4,000-odd credits include the theme tunes for National Lottery Live and even Jim'll Fix It.

But the British media has been far from kind – the Guardian said it was "nightmarish", and the Independent not much better claiming it is "instantly forgettable".

She defended the song and style, telling us: "That is all so unfair. I don't think there has been another song like this from the UK. We are trying something really new, and just hope it works.

"All we can promise is that we are absolutely going to do our best."

She said critics have been attacking the song "because it has been a bit of a shock".

Described a electro swing, it is an upbeat number likely to appeal to a wide demographic - no doubt the aim of the songwriter.

She added: "It hasn't been tried before and is something different – a different genre that is up and coming in Europe but not so well known here.

"We hope this will make us stand out. At least people are talking about it – it is the most watched online Eurovision entry."

Overcoming the extreme bias in voting - often described as politically motivated - will be her toughest hurdle, but the singer adds: "All I can do is go out there and do my best. What happens after that will be out of our control.

"There have been years when there have been shock winners. Last year, no one expected Conchita to win."

Conchita was the 'bearded lady' who won for Austria.

"There is no way of predicting what's going to happen. I am very hopeful we have a different song in a sea of others. We are not going to worry about it. So long as we have tried our best that is all we can do. We want to build bridges."

No stranger to show business, she was a contestant on The Voice last year and on X Factor in 2008. She said: "I have never been to Austria before, and I can't wait to get out to Vienna and do my best, and I hope to make the UK proud."

From a young age, it seems she was always destined for a life on the boards with a keen interest in performing arts.

When she reached five, she took the lead role in the Cannes Film Festival award-winning short film Is it the Design on the Wrapper?

When she hit her early teens, there was an appearance alongside Johnny Depp in the Hollywood blockbuster, Sleepy Hollow.

At 15, she finally made the decision that music was for her and she went on to perform at several high-profile charity events. There was a duet with Will Young, tour with Classical Brit winners 'Blake' and a performance for Princes William and Harry, and the Duchess of Cambridge.

Singing is helping her battle cystic fibrosis, which affects the lungs

The Eurovision Song Contest takes place in Vienna, Austria on May 23.

SO WHY DON'T WE WIN ANYMORE?

THE Eurovision Song Contest, it is fair to say, has changed dramatically in our public perception.

Where once it was seen as a show to enhance credibility, today it can be quite the opposite.

Dr Paul Jordan has a PhD in the contest. We asked him why the UK performs so poorly.

He said: ''It is often claimed that Europe doesn't like the UK and that the voting is political; that we stand little chance of doing well.

''I think such arguments are largely misinformed and fail to take account of the major changes that have taken place in Eurovision. Eurovision is bigger than ever, nearly 40 countries compete every year.

''Before 1999 the UK, Ireland and Malta were the only countries permitted to sing in English. This provided us with a massive advantage and undoubtedly helped the UK amass five victories and 15 second places.

''The rise of the public vote has highlighted voting patterns, of which the UK and Ireland are part of too. There's also the argument that we haven't been all that good. When we put in the effort, like we did in 2009, we are rewarded. If Germany can win, as they did in 2010, we can too. It's time to stop moaning and face the music.''

Certainly the competition's role of honour is certainly impressive.

Most significantly, it provided the platform for Abba - one of the world's most successful and endearing groups. The Swedish foursome triumphed with the classic Waterloo in 1974 when the contest was hosted in Brighton.

Leading up to that, the likes of Sandie Shaw (Puppet on a String won the contest in 1967), Cliff Richard (Congratulations came second in 1968), and Lulu (Boom Bang-a-Bang won the following year) all took part and flew the flag.

Bucks Fizz dazzled in 1981 with Making Your Mind Up, and our last winner was back in 1997 when Canadian Katrina and the Waves topped the vote with Love Shine a Light

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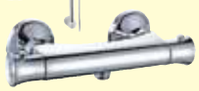

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Lizzy's full house as she adds world title to collection

FLYING: West Kingsdown's skeleton superstar Lizzy Yarnold prepares to take to the slopes

At just 26, golden girl Lizzy Yarnold has completed a clean sweep of winter sport skeleton's most prestigious awards, including that celebrated Olympic title. And, as she tells **Molly Kersey**, she has no intention of quitting just yet.

LIZZY Yarnold propelled herself into the record books last weekend as she completed a remarkable career grand slam of titles - an avalanche which began with her memorable gold at last year's Winter Olympic Games in Sochi, Russia.

The West Kingsdown racer, who hurls herself down ice trenches at terrifying speeds in the skeleton event, had already secured the Olympic, World Cup and European championship titles.

But she added to that last weekend in dramatic fashion as she secured the World Championship crown in Winterberg, Germany. A victory she secured in style by breaking the track record on day one and then again just 24 hours later.

She now holds the European, World Championship and Olympic titles simultaneously - a remarkable achievement for the 26-year-old.

Speaking to KoS this week she was buzzing with the achievement which fulfills all of her goals in a sport she has dominated for the last two years.

"It's amazing, I am really, really chuffed," she explained.

"I was asking a lot of myself so I am just really pleased that it all kind of came through.

"Achieving the track record in Winterberg was a personal highlight. That's something that will stand the test of time. I broke the track record by six tenths of a second, which was a huge margin."

She added: "I can't quite take it all in. It's all I ever wanted."

She beat fellow athlete German Jacqueline Loelling by 0.67 seconds. Upon such fine margins, in top sport, are winners and losers decided.

Cheered on by her family as she hurtled towards the finish line she said their support had been instrumental in her on-going success.

She explained: "It was the first time that my aunt had seen me in the flesh sliding and so I came around the corner for the first time and she burst into tears.

"It was very overwhelming for everyone because they were there together and celebrating together, and also nervous together at the same time.

"I think 90 per cent of it was nervous anticipation. It was great fun."

A huge crowd of spectators also turned out to watch her spectacular performance, with the noise of their cheers reverberating around the track.

"I would love to say thank you to everyone who has watched the sport over the last few years and supported the team," Miss Yarnold told KoS.

"It makes a huge difference when you are away from home and without friends and family; it helps to have that support."

The sporting legend attended schools in Otford and Maidstone, encouraged by her parents and her two sporty sisters.

Her life changed after she took part in UK Sport's Girls4Gold initiative - which sees highly competitive women selected for specific sports if they show attributes which could lead to them being an Olympic champion.

"You have to achieve a certain standard of performance," she said.

Despite desperately wanting to be chosen for the modern pentathlon, she was told she would be suited to the skeleton.

The winter sliding sport sees competitors riding a sled on an icy track, hurtling head first and reaching speeds of some 80mph.

Although she had never previously heard of it, and described her first time on the ice track as "petrifying", she took to it naturally.

The initiative helped pave her way to glory, and she shot to fame after becoming the only member of the Great Britain team at the Sochi Winter Olympics to bring home a gold medal.

She received a hero's welcome after

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returning to Kent, with an open-top bus ride from Sevenoaks to her home village.

Ms Yarnold's success has continued ever since, with trips around the world to defend her title, an MBE awarded to her and a place on the shortlist for the BBC Sports Personality of the Year in 2014.

But she said she never anticipated just how successful she would be when she started the sport.

"I had no idea," she said.

"It was a very difficult sport when I first started at the age of 19. It was a shock to the system. It was easy to hate the sport. It was physically very draining and mentally exhausting, but I just wanted to keep going and see how good I could be if I worked hard."

So what's next for the county's golden girl?

After all the hard work, a well-deserved break is on the cards.

"We have got a few more weeks of training ahead of us and we have lots of meetings at the end of the year. We meet with our coaches and review the whole season and then we have a break in April," she explained.

And Miss Yarnold said that it was "more than likely" that she would be spending some time in Kent soon.

"All my family are there, people I haven't had a chance to catch up with since Christmas.

"It's Mother's Day on Sunday, so I will be spending time with my family," she said.

She is unsure what the long-term future has in store for her.

"I hope I will retire at some point but it's a really hard one to say," she said.

"Our top male slider for the past few years is about 43, so you can keep going for as long as you want to really.

"I am not entirely sure what the future holds and that's quite exciting in itself."

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25 YEARS OF SUCCESS: The Tiger Lillies are coming to Canterbury's Gulbenkian

The very worst will be the very best of the Tiger Lillies

Cult multi award-winning act marks 25th anniversary with date in our county

THEY have been around for 25 years, and to celebrate, the Tiger Lillies are set to embark on a UK tour.

The Very Worst of the Tiger Lillies will arrive in Kent later this month.

But despite a quarter of a century in show business, and a fistful of accolades and awards, many people are still unaware of who the band are.

Martyn Jacques spoke to KoS about what they do.

"We have been called Belgian street opera, and also referred to as dark or gipsy cabaret.

"Some people have said that there's an element of film director Tim Burton's aesthetic to our work - but we also think there's a touch of Monty Python - we try and incorporate that kind of absurdist humour."

The group was nominated for five Olivier Awards - taking home two of them - for their cult musical Shockheaded Peter.

They won the two awards for best entertainment and best supporting performance in a musical or entertainment for Martyn Jacques.

The Tiger Lillies have also received a Grammy Award nomination for their classical crossover album The Gorey End.

The look the band have evolved over a number of years in becoming more fashionable - due in some part to themselves.

Mr Jacques says: "We have a strong and specific look, with our make up and costumes.

"I didn't wear make up at the start - that is something that has evolved while doing circus shows, but we always had the bowler hats and Victorian clothing.

"Some people are intimidated by that look, and we still get people walking out of shows, although that is very rare.

"The whole look is definitely becoming more accepted by the mainstream - I think the whole burlesque scene is getting more fashionable, and that ties in to our appeal."

Although their work may be entering the mainstream, this has not meant it is being diluted.

"If you come to our shows, you are going on a bit of a journey," he says. "It is not always an easy ride - it can be challenging or difficult, but rewarding if you stick with it."

The band have accumulated a number of high-profile fans, with The Simpsons creator Matt Groening asking them to perform the show's theme song for an episode, later booking them to play at his ATP Festival claiming in his introduction 'All these bands are my favourites, but here is a favourite, favourite'.

It is no surprise that they have picked up fans in America.

Mr Jacques says: "We are very international and we play all over the world.

"We have a cult following that comes from all over - and hopefully as a few more years go by, we will pick up some more fans.

"It's always nice when people discover you."

The Tiger Lillies bring their tour to Canterbury's Gulbenkian Theatre on March 23 at 7.30pm.

Tickets cost £18. For more information, visit www.thegulbenkian.co.uk or call the box office on 01227 769075.

» Email us details of your event to:
editorial@kosmedia.co.uk
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Margate musical must see

UNIVERSITY of Chichester's touring company bring their production of the musical Sweet Charity to the Theatre Royal in Margate on March 28 and 29.

Call the box office on 01843 292795.

Magic on the dance floor

LAMBERHURST School of Theatre Dance presents the ballet The Nutcracker at Tunbridge Wells' Assembly Hall Theatre on March 22 at 2pm and 5pm

Tickets cost £14 for adults, and £10 for children. Visit www. assemblyhalltheatre.co.uk for more information.

Classic sound of the '60s

THE Searchers will bring some of their classic hits, like Sweets for my Sweet to Margate's Winters Gardens on March 21.

Call the box office on 01843 292795. Tickets cost between £17.50 and £19.50.

Fifty shades of... beige

THE Grumpy Old Women will return to the stage with their new show Fifty Shades of Beige next month.

The lineup, which includes Jenny Eclair comes to Folkstone's Leas Cliff Hall on April 17.

For more information, call the box office on 01303 228600.

Classical music in the perfect church setting

By Maria Chiorando
maria.chiorando@archant.co.uk

THE Pomegranate Piano Trio will play in Canterbury later this month.

The trio will be playing as part of the Welcome to Music at St Peter's series, which is now in its 16th season. This series of performances aims to continue to explore a broad repertoire with a knowledgeable audience, and to encourage young artists to enhance their credentials and experience.

The organisers also hope to take the music of St Peter's to as wide an audience as possible.

Since giving their debut concert at the Bishopsgate Institute for the City of London Chamber Music Society in January 2014, the trio, of Fenella Barton (violin), cellist Rebecca Hepplewhite (nee Hewes) and Robin Green (piano), has quickly established a reputation for their performances.

They now pursues a busy concert diary playing programmes throughout England, Scotland and Wales.

The programme they will be playing in Canterbury will include Mozart Piano Trio in B flat major written when the composer was at the height of his powers and enjoying real success.

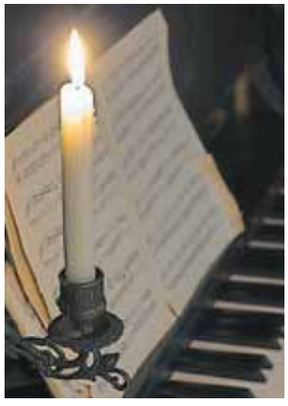
He had just completed his six string quartets and The Marriage of Figaro.

He was living in Vienna and pianos were not yet the dominant keyboard instrument and it was he more than anyone who awoke the Viennese to the possibilities of the piano as a concerto and chamber instrument.

The Rachmaninov Trio éléglac No 1 was written in Moscow when the composer was 19 years old. The work was composed in the wake of the intense emotion he felt at the death of Tchaikovsky who had supported the musical career of the young Rachmaninov.

The concert take place on March 21 at 7.30pm. Tickets are available by calling 01227 767569 from Poppies Restaurant next to St Peter's Methodist Church, St Peter's Street, Canterbury or on the door and are £12.00 each.

STRINGS: Play a part in the music



ATMOSPHERE: The trio will play an evocative repertoire

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Sleeping amongst the tigers at Port Lympne

By Maria Chiorando
maria.chiorando@archant.co.uk

ANYONE looking for a staycation with a difference should check out the new camping pod accommodation at popular tourist attraction Port Lympne.

In what is the latest space created for overnight stays within the picturesque location - it has been offering a wide range of facilities for several years - the Pinewood camping pods are considered to be low maintenance camping. They promise to bring the benefits of outdoor living without the need to pitch tents.

It also gives those staying the chance to stay amid the wildlife, with access to the park both the day of arrival and departure.

Best of all, all profits are ploughed back into the park's parent charity, the Aspinall Foundation, which oversees both Port Lympne, near Hythe, and Howletts in Bekesbourne, near Canterbury.

The camping pods are compact wooden huts, which have twin beds and rustic decor.

Most excitingly, they are built within earshot of the big cats.

Bob O'Connor, the managing director said: "Guests will enjoy exclusive early access to the park, before we open to the public, and in the evening, just imagine listening to the lions, tigers and prowling cheetahs, whilst you're snuggled up in your cosy pod."

The Aspinall Foundation is a conservation charity that breeds captive endangered animals including lions, tigers, gorillas and African elephants in the UK.

Damian Aspinall, chairman of the Aspinall Foundation, and son of park founder John, said: "Pinewood is just one of several new developments for 2015 and beyond.

"This year we will also see the launch of our stunning new Treehouse Hotel – 10 luxury glass fronted suites, set high in the tree line overlooking the reserve."

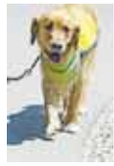
The Pinewood site will be open all year round, and can accommodate up to 44 guests at a time.

For details and pricing, see www.aspinallfoundation.org.

RARE: An Amur tiger

WILD: Cheetahs roam the wildlife reserve

Variety show for guide dogs



MAIDSTONE'S Hazlitt Theatre will be raising money for guide dogs with a variety show on March 21. Tickets cost £15 plus a £1 booking fee.

Call the box office on 01622 758611.

Folk music at The Lounge

FOLK singer Gerry Colvin will be playing at The Lounge in Canterbury on March 21.

Doors open at 7.15pm for an 8pm start and tickets cost between £5 and £15.

For more information or to book tickets, visit the website at www.folkinthebarn.co.uk or call 01227 831493.

Greek gods in the park

THEATRICAL group Niche bring their production of Lysistrata to Charlton Park in Canterbury.

The show is on March 24 and 25 and tickets cost between £8 and £12.50. Call 01227 831355.

Comedy of the minute

PAUL Merton and his improv chums will be coming to Canterbury's Marlowe Theatre on May 5 at 7.30pm.

The comedian, known for his dry and sarcastic wit, is a team captain on the BBC's Have I Got News for You.

Visit www.marlowetheatre.com.

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The sound of music in Salzburg

TRAVEL REVIEW: Salzburg

By Keeley Bolger

VIBRANT: The sights - and sounds of Julie Andrews and Salzburg

"HERE'S the bench that an 82-year-old lady slipped on while dancing to Sixteen Going On Seventeen and then fell through a pane of glass," says Peter the tour guide at a newly restored and immaculate gazebo in Hellbrun Palace on the outskirts of Salzburg.

"She was such a big Sound Of Music fan she couldn't resist dancing in the gazebo. She's fine now though, just a few scratches," he adds, as our horrified reflections beam back out at us from the restored window pane.

I too am a huge fan of The Sound Of Music and the sight of the gazebo where eldest Von Trapp child Liesl and her telegram delivery boyfriend Rolfe frolicked, flirted and snogged, fills my limbs with an urge to sing.

You can't move for Sound Of Music reminders in Salzburg. Sure, there are references to Mozart (that other tourist pull), everywhere, but with the film's 50th anniversary looming, Wolfgang will have to wait.

Judging by the city's tourists, I'm not the only one here geeking out on the film's legacy.

Indeed, 50 years on from the film's release, it is still the first thing many of us picture when thinking of Salzburg.

Serving as a love letter to the city, the movie flaunts Salzburg's picture-postcard alpine views, pretty churches and market stalls with rosy-cheeked vendors.

Nowadays, that view has little changed. Coinciding my trip with a bank holiday means that the city's residents are decked out in the traditional lederhosen and dirndl Maria and Co wear in the film.

The difference being that, from the looks of it, no one has fashioned theirs out of a curtain.

For me, an embarrassingly big fan of the film, seeing a seemingly unchanged city and all this traditional get-up is a delight to behold.

I was such an aficionado that I had a scrapbook complete with glued down photocopies of the lyrics and stapled in interviews with Julie Andrews. As routes to popularity go, it wasn't a conventional one.

Likewise, my love of The Sound Of Music wore thin on my family and made me unpopular at weekends, when we regularly fought for control of the telly. Determined not to 'miss out' on another chance to see the film, I'd hurl my 12-year-old body out of bed at an early hour and load up the battered VHS again, promptly waking the household with a blast of La Andrews.

Then there was the time I threw a strop because a family Christening meant missing a new documentary, Sound Of Music: Behind The Music and a broken video recorder left me pleading with our neighbours to record it for me instead. A cursory glimpse of the rest of the tour group confirms that I'm not the only one who has fallen under the musical - and indeed the city's - spell.

Admittedly, some of the group aren't bores like me. "You ARE a big fan aren't you?" withers one sceptic who has come here to see what all the fuss is about. But even he can't fail to fling his arms out when we head to Salzkammergut, the pretty lakeside area that is used during the opening sequence.

Neither can the fresh stream of Sound Of Music tourists who pull up in their bus, mural of the movie splashed on the side, and trickle out taking selfies, wailing The Sound Of Music missing the high, medium and low notes as they go.

"Not everyone can sing like Julie Andrews, huh?" nudges a fan to the left of me who is keeping his distance from a hen group, kitted out in matching Sound Of Music hoodies.

Luckily, tuneful singing can still be found in the shape of The Sound Of Salzburg Dinner Show. Held regularly, a crew of note-perfect singers recite tunes from the show as well as folk songs and Mozart pieces.

Here, guests can gorge on schnitzel with noodles and apple strudels and even take a turn around the small stage with the cast, who perform a simple Viennese waltz. It may not be the grand party that Captain Von Trapp throws in the musical, but it's a jolly nod to the film.

But with the strains of So Long, Farewell ringing out, I too pay my goodbyes to this wonderful city, safe in the knowledge that here, the hills are still very much alive with music.

TRAVEL FACTS

■ Keeley Bolger was a guest of Salzburg City (www.salzburg.info) and SalzburgerLand (www.salzburgerland.com) tourist boards. Prices quoted are subject to availability. Inghams (www.inghams.co.uk) offers three-night breaks staying at Hotel NH Salzburg City from £509pp including return flights from Gatwick.

Film Reviews by Damon Smith

X+Y

(12A, 112 mins) Drama/Romance

X+Y is a bittersweet drama, which has been engineered to a predictable formula: misunderstood genius + neurodevelopmental disorder + touching romance = triumph against adversity.

Nathan, an autistic savant teenager, struggles to connect emotionally with people around him including his caring mother, Julie.

Haunted by memories of his father, the one person who nurtured Nathan's "special powers", the teenager seeks comfort in complex mathematics.

Spall channels Michael Caine's boozy tutor from Educating Rita, replete with wry one-liners, while Hawkins provides excellent support, repeatedly reaching out to her boy only for him to recoil at her touch. Her frustration and heartache is palpable.

RUN ALL NIGHT

(15, 114 mins) Action/Thriller/Romance

RUN All Night opens with one character on the brink of death then rewinds 16 hours, confidently staging testosterone-fuelled set pieces including a high-speed car chase and a daredevil escape from a burning building.

The director energises static scenes with swirling camerawork, enhanced with a high-energy soundtrack courtesy of Dutch dance producer Junkie XL.

Screenwriter Ingelsby condenses each strained relationship to one or two scenes of succinct dialogue, including a terrific bout of verbal sparring in a restaurant.

The actors land glancing blows in limited shared screen time. You learn quickly when there's a gun to your head.

SUITE FRANCAISE

(15, 107 mins) Drama/Romance/War

HEARTBREAKING truth is more compelling than fiction in Suite Francaise, Saul Dibb's faithful adaptation of the novella Dolce by Irene Nemirovsky.

Penned by Nemirovsky, a French Jew, in the early 1940s, Dolce was supposed to be the second instalment of a five-book series documenting life under German occupation and the rise of the Communist resistance.

Shortly after completing the second tome, the author was arrested by the Nazis and sent to Auschwitz, where she died, leaving behind a journal filled with finished work, detailed notes for a third book and provisional titles for the concluding instalments.

Dibb's picture concludes with moving testimony to the author, providing an emotional kick that is sadly lacking from the rest of his handsomely crafted tale of forbidden love in a time of conflict.

By Hannah Stephenson
editorial@kosmedia.co.uk

DIMENSIONS: Huge trees are contrasted with tiny blooms for rural authenticity

A rural touch for your garden

EVER wondered how to give your garden a real rural touch? Award-winning designer Dan Pearson may be able to help.

After an 11-year absence, Pearson will be returning to work his magic at his sixth RHS Chelsea Flower Show by creating a garden inspired by Chatsworth in Derbyshire, focusing on the more rural part of the estate.

His Laurent-Perrier Chatsworth Garden will represent a small part of the 105-acre garden, inspired by the park's ornamental trout stream and Paxton's rockery, depicting an ornamental woodland animated by a naturalistic water feature.

"We often use water in small gardens to try to deflect surrounding noises that might be beyond the boundaries of the garden, like traffic, neighbours or pedestrians.

"Water is a good thing in urban gardens where you have a lot of background noise.

"In an urban garden with limited space, you might introduce water by having a little pool with a pump and water falling over a rock into the pool. That can be done in just a square metre," he says.

Pearson is using colour quite freely in his woodland garden at Chelsea and is something he recommends to gardeners whose plot may be overhung by trees or oversized shrubs.

"Don't be afraid of clashing colours when you have enough weight of green elsewhere."

The garden will also have large elements, including rocks from Chatsworth, which are being juxtaposed with small, delicate flowers to achieve an effective change in scale.

"In a smaller space, it's always good not to be afraid of using large things like a simple piece of topiary, contrasted with plants with small flowers alongside it. Play with that change of scale. It allows you to inject a sense of confidence, like putting a lovely big sofa in the room, then just using a small print or motif on it which stops the piece being too weighty.

"The sort of plants you'd use alongside a simple piece of topiary would stop it from feeling too heavy. We're using things you can see through like umbellifers, not cow parsley but angelica and Ligusticum scoticum (Scotch lovage), which is like a miniature angelica,and some delicate grasses like Melica altissima Alba, which has tiny silvery flowers which make things shimmer and pick up the breeze."

Woodland planting which is easy to replicate includes evergreen ground covers.

"In shady settings and woodland gardens, often in the summer when things die down, you're just left with bare earth. When bulbs which have done well in the spring die out, so we use evergreen ground cover to support that space which otherwise ends up being something and nothing in the height of summer."

If you only have a patio garden, a piece of topiary might make a focal point, with wild strawberries in smaller pots alongside."

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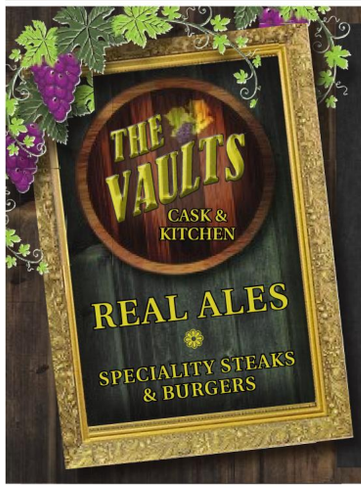

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Frank and his son, who is also named Frank, worked hard together to create a very popular establishment.

Frank senior semi-retired in the late 1980s and his son continued to run the business.

He was then joined by his son Frank in the early 2000s.

The restaurant was leased out to Cafe Belge in 2004.

They changed the menu to a more continental style, with young Frank working with them.

In 2010, he took the business back, naming it Frank's Restaurant and Mussels Bar as it is known today.

He then used his experience to combine the best of both cuisines.

The restaurant offers a variety of Belgium and European beers and the finest quality mussels in the UK, along with the best of Frank's grandfather and father's beloved English fare.

The two styles of food have mixed well together, both proving equally popular.

This is in no small part due to Frank's constant vigilance to source the best quality of food that he can find.

The menu includes succulent steaks, tender mussels and sea fresh fish.

The restaurant has a great selection of food and drink on offer for diners to enjoy.

Their forte is mussels cooked 21 ways.

Frank's aim, like his father and grandfather before him, is to provide the very best that he can for his customers.

The atmosphere in the Tudor framed building, which features a magnificent original inglenook fireplace, makes for a tranquil setting for dinners.

It is a great place to eat, be it at lunch time or at an evening meal.

The building is full of charm and character.

It has exposed beams and provides a cosy space for customers to relax and enjoy their food.

Please visit www.franksrestaurantandmusselsbar.com for more information about the restaurant, including opening times, what they have on their menus and what they have to offer you.

Alternatively you can email enquiries@franksrestaurant.com with any questions or call 01732843247 for further details.

Frank's Restaurant and Mussels Bar is situated in the bustling, picturesque market town of West Malling.

They are located at 53-55 High Street, West Malling, Kent, ME19 6QH.

Old Vaults with winning recipe

SINCE this 16th-century public house was refurbished and reopened in 2009, its reputation for pub food, in particular the selection of specialist steaks, has spread throughout the county.

The Old Vaults is situated in the centre of Faversham town, and has a large beer garden.

They regularly welcome visitors who have travelled for many miles to sample their home cooking and ale.

Their speciality steak menu is full of succulent, tender steaks, from various cuts, cooked just the way you like them, and with a range of accompaniments.

They also make fantastic homemade burgers.

If you're vegetarian, they have a choice of freshly cooked meals, carefully prepared in an area separate from the meat dishes, to tempt the most discerning tastes.

The Old Vaults hold a place in the 2015 good beer guide and have a range of fun activities on offer.

These include Sunday lunch featuring a family platter for only £20, a quiz and curry night on the first Monday of the month and live music last Saturday of the month.

FANTASTIC: Homemade burgers

DELICIOUS: The restaurant offers a menu inspired by local seasonal produce with venison, pork and lamb.

Stunning restaurant is perfect for dining and social gatherings

LOCATED in the picturesque Kentish market town of East Malling, The Swan - once a 15th-century inn- is a firm favourite.

The stunning restaurant was awarded two AA Rosettes and is Michelin recommended.

It has a beautiful cocktail bar situated on the ground floor with a stunning restaurant space.

Upstairs there is a private lounge bar and three other unique private rooms, perfectly suited for dining and social gatherings.

In warmer months, the beautiful garden is open for diners, drinkers and events. The peaceful top terrace is the perfect wedding venue in the summer months.

The style of food is modern British. Co-owner Darryl Healy and Head Chef Lee Edney offer a menu inspired by local seasonal produce with venison, pork and lamb – all purchased from local farms, providing 100 per cent provenance to customers.

During the game season wild shot pheasant and mallard are regular menu staples, supplied by Kent Field Farm in Offham.

For more information, please visit www.theswanwestmalling.co.uk

CHEF RECOMMENDS

Oyster Pearl

Seasalter, Whitstable, Kent, CT5 4BJ
Telephone: 01227 272705
Website: oysterpearlrestaurant.vpweb.co.uk/

Starter: Tempura battered oysters with a bloody mary shot

Main: Pan-fried, local line-caught sea bass with a quenelle of creamy mash & sardine and tomato sauce

Dessert: Warm date & walnut cake with rum and raisin sauce topped with vanilla ice-cream

Captain Digby

Whiteness Road, Broadstairs, Kent CT10 3QH
Telephone: 01843 867 764
Website: www.captaindigby.co.uk

Starter: Southern fried chicken fillets served with a tangy barbecue dip.

Main: Steak and ale pie topped with a golden pastry lid. Served with your choice of chips, jacket or new potatoes & fresh veg

Tartar Frigate

The Tartar Frigate, Harbour Street, Broadstairs , Kent, CT10 1EU
Telephone: 01843 862013
Website: www.tartarfrigateco.uk

Starter: Avocado and Crabmeat Tower. Rich brown crabmeat and slices of ripe avocado, topped with flaked white crabmeat, with a coriander, lemon and tomato dressing.

Main: Whole Sea Bass en Papillote. Wrapped in a parcel with orange thyme & red wine

feedback

your say...

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Did potholes ever really leave us?

'POTHOLES make an unwelcome return' (KoS, last week) - but did they ever go away?

Some months ago when I reported some to KCC, I was told only holes three inches deep could be restored.

So this was done, often with holes two and a half inches deep a few inches away left untouched. When I suggested to KCC that many of the holes were created by the utilities companies resurfacing after they had dug up the roads, I was told that these were inspected on completion.

But how long after completion? They might look great after a week or two, but how about inspecting after 3-6 months?

I do not want to risk my life by cycling in the dark.

Marika Sherwood
Oare

Green Belt must be protected

FURTHER to your article ('Is it time we consider building on protected green belt land?' KoS, last week), I think the Green Belt should be protected and that related things should be looked at in the long term.

We are experiencing climate change and more severe weather. More houses now have concrete drives and most new houses are built with tiny gardens and larger drives. This increases the temperature as concrete gets hotter than grass (every weather forecast gives the countryside temperature several degrees lower than city temperatures) and can increase flooding when we have wet weather. Cities are also polluted and need to be surrounded by fields and trees which can absorb carbon dioxide.

More houses need more water and electricity, and we could well run out. Not so long ago we had hosepipe bans and there is less water underground now.

There are plenty of empty houses in the north and perhaps industrial hubs and housing could be built there.

Jean Coulter,
via email

...**VERY** few people support concreting over Green Belt.

Government policies, far from strengthening Green Belts are encouraging developers to JCB them at a rapidly increasing rate. This when developers are sitting on land that already has planning permission for 250,000 homes and when there is enough brownfield land to build 1.5 million homes without destroying an acre of our natural heritage.

There are also numerous empty homes that should be brought back into use.

Open door immigration has caused the huge increase in demand for housing. Government directives to councils and decisions by unelected planning inspectors have left local communities powerless to restrain development.

Until these policies are fundamentally revised to reflect the views of ordinary people, the threat not only to our Green Belts but also to our irreplaceable green fields, heaths, and ancient woodland will only intensify.

Terry Cload,
Pembury

..ONLY as a last resort should we build on Green Belt land.

Our 'green and pleasant' land needs to be kept green and pleasant in order to lift our spirits, for picnics and paintings, also agriculture for grain, animal feed and fruit, drainage to allow for water that we are often short of, sports grounds and children's play areas.

Also as soon as we increase the people in an area it is necessary to think of shops, schools, doctors, transport.

The author, Gilbert Green, is of course on the lookout for business but too many mistakes are made because a project was not given sufficient thought.

Olive Merriman,
via email

LETTER OF THE WEEK

Airport plans need take-off clearance

THE letter published last week from Hugh Bunce, of Petts Wood, made several highly misleading claims about Biggin Hill Airport's plan to create 2,300 jobs and reduce the noise footprint by half.

Mr Bunce claims that a modest increase in opening hours will 'definitely' increase noise. This is not the case at all. If the extra hours are approved, there will be a strict limit of eight aircraft movements allowed during the extra period.

In reality, we don't think we'll get near that limit as our plan is about giving aircraft owners flexibility.

They won't always need to fly later - but they need to know they can if they need to. A bit like if you kept your car in a public garage, you would want to be able to access it at a time convenient to you – you wouldn't go out at 6.30am every morning and come home at 11pm, but you would like to know that, on the one or two occasions a year that you needed to, you could.

As light aircraft movements decrease, business aircraft movements will fill the gap. But the important thing to remember is that overall, there will be no more movements than today (around 50,000 per year, down from 100,000 in the early 1990s).

Our plan will cut the agreed noise footprint by half through a series of measures such as keeping aircraft higher for longer. For example, we have recently agreed a trial of this over Petts Wood with Air Traffic Control, meaning aircraft will descend to 2,200 feet instead of 1,800 feet at present. This will reduce noise on the ground.

We make no apology for wanting to create more local jobs and giving youngsters the chance to have a good career in aviation in their home town. The extra 2,300 jobs will be created over a period to 2030 - so it's not correct to claim there will suddenly be more traffic and instant pressure on housing. It's modest and sensible growth that has been approved by independent consultants to Bromley council and most importantly the jobs will go to people already living in the borough

Our plan is about making the airport more successful and doing what we do today a little bit better, with no extra flights, no new runways, no scheduled holiday airlines and no expansion beyond existing boundaries.

This is a one-off opportunity for local people to decide the future of the airport. The choice is between securing Biggin Hill's future as a small, business and general aviation airport that is sensitive to local concerns in the quietest sector of aviation, or to let it decline and leave it prey to Government wanting more runway capacity or greedy private housing developers.

I know which one I'd prefer and I hope you will join me in my vision for a quieter and more prosperous airport that will create new opportunities for Bromley residents, while generating badly needed revenues that will help to pay for public service because that is an airport that we can all be proud of and support.

Will Curtis
Managing director, Biggin Hill Airport

Maidstone Zoo memories

OH HOW lovely it was to read about the forgotten zoo at the bottom of Bluebell Hill.

I remember my parents taking me there in the 1950s.

I must have been quite young around five or six years old.

We waited for a train to take us from the entrance down what seemed a very long road to the zoo gates. I think it was a tractor with carriages on the back, Mum had a moan because it was uncomfortable.

The main thing that I remember was a lion – a very mangy one with his mane falling out, how disappointed I was, lions in my eyes were supposed to be grand with beautiful coats and huge manes around their heads. Of course the poor old thing must have been moulting but I did not know about things like that then.

Looking at the layout of the roads now it seems hard to believe that a zoo ever existed, it is nice to know that someone has remembered it because in a few years there will be no one to remember it ever being there.

The photographs brought back memories, I walked along the path in front of the cages shown in one of them and saw that poor lion kept in a cage so small.

Amanda Tring,
Cliffe

...**I REMEMBER** visiting the zoo in the mid/late 1950s, driving down the tree lined avenue to the entrance.

Travelling on the zoo train and viewing the animals (some of which kept in conditions that would be frowned upon today) but a very big attraction in Kent.

Incidentally I still have a copy of the Official Plan and Guide from my visit priced at three old pence.

Martyn Halls,
via email

...**I REMEMBER** seeing the elephants, Gertrude and Daisy, and also, did I ride from the gate to the zoo on a train, maybe a narrow gauge line? Correct me if I'm wrong.

D Allard,
via email

...**I REMEMBER** going to Maidstone Zoo in the 1950s with my sister Susan.

At the entrance was a train so it was great fun arriving on the train. Spent may happy occasions at the zoo.

Anita White,
via email

images of kent

Tankerton, near Whitstable

by **Ralph Baker, Margate**

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We all need some…
my time
avante
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SEE PAGE 53

What is long-term future for the big supermarkets?

SEE PAGE 56

Summer set to sizzle for tourism in county

BusinessQuarter

EU fuels jitters ahead of polling day

Jamie Weir looks at increasing anxiety felt by businesses ahead the general election - regardless of who wins

GENERAL elections bring with them a cloud of uncertainty for the business community.

From potential tax changes to the friendliness or otherwise of an incoming party, it can cause jitters.

And with this year's election likely to be the closest in recent history, that anxiety is clouding what has been a gradual rise in confidence over recent months.

With the prospect of another coalition looking likely too, but it being far from clear as to which parties will form it, it is perhaps little wonder there are some nerves.

The Wealden Business Group – which represents 30 businesses in the west of the county – has said some 60 per cent of its businesses say they are worried about the possible outcome of the general election.

It cites concerns if there is either a straight win for either Ed Miliband's Labour Party or David Cameron's Conservatives.

Among the key concerns being felt are our continual role in the European Union and a possible referendum.

The effect could be particularly acutely felt in Kent due to our close proximity to continental markets.

Chairman of the business group, Simon Hammond, said: "The reservations expressed about the election and, possibly, the EU referendum are likely to be temporary until the results are known. However, there is a groundswell of continuing confidence as we go through 2015, and long may it continue."

The businesses have said that either a Labour Party win, or a Conservative victory, could cause problems – at least in the short

Continues over page

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DEVELOPMENT: Could come to a halt during the period of uncertainty leading up to May 7

Continues from previous page

term – for organisations operating across the Weald.

Just under a third of businesses said they were concerned about a Labour victory, citing reasons like potential changes to business taxation and investment policy.

They were particularly concerned about the potential impacts on the housing market in the Weald – a historically buoyant sector.

It wasn't just a Labour win which caused worry though, with 30 per cent of businesses stating that there could be a pause on investment and expansion if the Tory party won. That, said respondents, was because of the EU referendum promise.

However, law firm Cripps says there's nothing unusual in a short slow down in advance of a general election.

Gavin Tyler, managing partner of Cripps, told KoS: "Uncertainty about the future is always a feature in the run-up to an election. Some people want to accelerate projects, others prefer to hang fire.

"Property drives a sizeable part of our business and whilst we've noted a slight decrease on domestic residential property transactions, our commercial property business is busier than it has been for many years.

"Tighter lending criteria has had a more significant impact on corporate and property transactions and is likely to continue to dampen activity.

"Whatever the election outcome, a government that is pro-business and which continues to encourage domestic and international investment in the UK is what our local economy and the wider country needs."

Pro-business seems to be the buzzword for many companies in the county, with Andrew Metcalf, a director at Tunbridge Wells-based Maxim PR agency, saying it isn't important who wins, as long as they foster that growth attitude with policy that backs economic development.

Mr Metcalf who also represents local business interests on the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership, told KoS: "For any business to have the confidence to invest, it needs a fair degree of certainty that whichever party, or parties for that matter, are elected, that they will have a positive attitude towards helping businesses to grow."

> **"The government needs to acknowledge only London and the south east are net contributors to the Treasury, and so more should be done to back these areas"**
>
> **Andrew Metcalf,**
> Local business director

He had tough words for whoever is elected, telling KoS that the region – alongside London – should get greater respect from government for its contribution to the wider economy.

He said: "The government, regardless of its colour, needs to acknowledge that only London and the south east are net contributors to the Treasury, and so more should be done to back these areas as they can deliver the fastest growth and greatest prosperity for the country as a whole.

"What too many people in government forget is that without business, there's no employment, and therefore no wages to be spent in the local economy, nor taxes to be spent on our health, defence or education."

A number of local elections will also be contested in May.

Mr Metcalf said that these would colour the business picture in the short term too, potentially constraining the county's growth prospects.

He said: "It is also important to recognise that May 7 will also see local elections in many Kent districts and Medway. Too often local elections can hinder economic growth by delaying planning decisions. Some applications are delayed as they may be seen as too contentious to be heard in the run up to an election and might lose local support, despite offering the prospect of jobs and growth for the future."

The election is also likely to cause some uncertainty among business because of its likelihood that it will end up with a coalition government.

Darren Rigden, a partner at Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells-based auditors, Crowe Clark Whitehill, told KoS that if a coalition is formed, it could have longer lasting impacts.

He said: "Both the Budget and the general election will inevitably create a degree of uncertainty for businesses. With recent polls suggesting that a coalition government is the most likely outcome, a period of uncertainty is likely to continue long after the election."

Is the election making you anxious for your business? Share your views and join the debate. Email us at editorial@kosmedia.co.uk

The Great British High Street competition launched this week

Folkestone was a runner-up last year

THE government launched its second Great British High Street competition on Friday (March 13), giving towns and cities across the UK the opportunity to win a hefty cash prize.

Across the county, communities are being urged to enter the competition, celebrating their success in transforming their town into a great place to shop.

The last competition saw a number of Kent towns come close to taking the prize, with Folkestone shortlisted in the competition. It will be trying to better its runner-up status this time.

Councillor David Callahan, who represents Folkestone Harvey Central, told KoS: "I really hope we can win this year. I'd welcome the chance to showcase the town's High Street in the competition, and put it on a national stage."

The competition was launched by the government's high streets minister, Penny Mordaunt.

She said: "High streets are a vital part of our economy supporting thousands of jobs in retail and leisure but they are also the heart of all communities providing a great place for friends and family to meet.

"There is so much amazing innovation happening on our high streets. We want to reward the great work that is being done to improve these crucial assets as well as showcase ideas which can be a springboard for others to try.

"The first competition last year was a tremendous success and I want this year to be even better."

This year, judging will be slightly different, with communities being encouraged to get involved for the first time. The public will get to vote on their favourite high street online once shortlisted town's and city's are announced.

The competition aims to help revitalise high streets by promoting the work that is being done and sharing ideas. Work to regenerate ailing high streets led to a year-on-year average weekly retail sales increase of 4.8 per cent in January.

BACKING: The minister said that government was backing apprentices

Apprentices great for business

BUSINESSES around the county have been celebrating apprenticeship schemes this week.

Minister for life sciences, George Freeman, dropped into former Pfizer site, Discovery Park, to speak to some of the apprentices working there.

He said that the two million new apprenticeship starts in this parliament were testament to the Government's commitment to employment.

Dungeness power station also praised its apprentices, with EDF Energy's current managing director, Stuart Crooks, saying that its scheme gave recruits some 'amazing opportunities'.

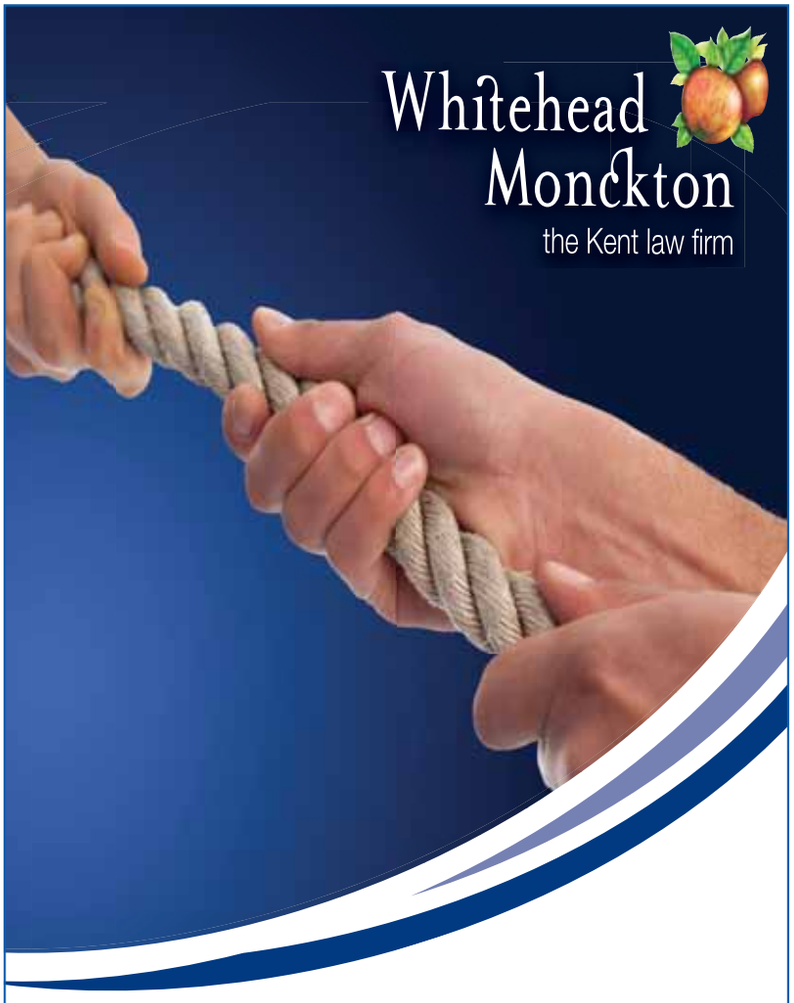
Brewers raise glass to growth

INDEPENDENT brewers around the county will raise a pint after the Society of Independent Brewers (Siba) announced sales of beer had grown by 25 per cent since March 2013.

The group says that the rise – and resulting 15.8 per cent increase in beer production – are as a result of tax cuts for the industry.

The end of the beer duty escalator alongside two duty cuts are likely to have fuelled the boom.

This has led to the creation of an estimated 1,600 jobs, with 83 per cent of members stating they intend to create jobs this year.



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There are rough seas ahead for big supermarket groups

Morrisons announces it will close some of its smaller stores after poor performance

RETAIL giants have continued to slide over the last year, with both Morrisons and the John Lewis Partnership announcing weaker results than hoped this week.

The continuing slowdown in the retail sector saw Morrisons announce that its profits had dipped by 52 per cent, to just £345 million. That was the chain's worst performance in eight years.

The retailer said that as a result, it would be looking to close 23 of its under-performing M convenience stores.

Some of those closures could happen in Kent, with three of the M stores, and 15 other supermarkets dotted around the county.

However the supermarket also announced that it was taking a write down in the value of its property portfolio.

The £1.3 billion devaluation of the company's supermarket holdings drags its performance to a £792 million loss.

There is an expectation in the market that similar write downs are likely for other big supermarket groups, such as Tesco, with many have considerable land holdings throughout the county.

Trouble in the retail sector hasn't been confined to Morrisons.

The John Lewis partnership, which encompasses Waitrose, has also fared poorly. It released its annual results on Thursday, telling investors it had made pre-tax profits of £343 million which were down by 9 per cent year-on-year.

TROUBLED: Supermarket giants are seeing their profits slashed in tough trading conditions

The group blamed the slide in profits on the impact of supermarket chain Waitrose's performance in what it described as a 'highly competitive and deflationary market'.

Waitrose sales grew by 6.5 per cent to £6.51 billion, but trading conditions saw a fall in operating profits of 23.4 per cent to £237.4 million.

Lower supermarket returns over the longer term are also likely according to the group, with the retailer's chairman, Sir Charlie Mayfield, saying that: "We expect the returns for the grocery sector to be materially lower for a period of time."

The decrease in pre-tax profits has led to its staff bonus pot shrinking, with workers taking home an 11 per cent bonus on their annual salary this year.

That means John Lewis staff at the group's Ashford, Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells stores, as well as Waitrose stores county-wide will see their annual bonuses cut by four per cent this year - to 11 per cent of their annual salary.

That will still give workers - who all own shares in the company - with an extra six weeks' of pay, leaving an average full-time section manager taking almost £2,500 extra home.

The company's chairman also says that the slump should, at least for Waitrose, not last for long, stating that the company had worked hard to reposition itself.

Sir Charlie said: "Waitrose's value perception has improved significantly over the last few years and we will continue to defend that hard won position during this period of change in the grocery sector."

The group said that the supermarket arm of the group had been constrained by three primary factors; the impact of trading in a highly competitive and deflationary market; a significantly higher level of investment in the year; and the impact of one-off items, including property impairments and onerous leases.

Businesses should act now to take advantage of tax break according to business advisors

Tax relief could be available up to £500,000

BUSINESSES are going to need to act swiftly, if they are to take advantage of substantial tax breaks when investing in plant or machinery, according to an accountancy practice.

DSH Chartered Accountants and Business Advisors, which is based in Maidstone, says that businesses which want to take advantage of the Annual Investment Allowance (AIA) tax break, need to get planning now.

The AIA is an allowance for plant and machinery which is capped annually. This means that qualifying expenditure up to the capped amount can be written off against taxable profits during the same period.

Until the end of this year, the AIA has been set at £500,000 - up from just £25,000. It will return to its previous level of £25,000 from January 1 2016, but DSH says businesses need to get started planning.

Stephen Metcalfe, from DSH, said: "AIA applies to most assets bought by businesses, including vans, lorries, diggers, machines and tools, office equipment and computers – but not cars.

"The current limit should cover the annual asset spend of most SMEs, but businesses of all sizes with capital expenditure plans may want to ensure they are completed before the AIA cap reverts to its previous level."

The allowance can be claimed by individuals, partnerships or companies carrying on a trade, profession or vocation or a UK non-residential property business or a furnished holiday let.

"This is an extremely attractive benefit for businesses of all sizes. However, the timing of capital expenditure can significantly impact on tax liabilities so, before rushing to take advantage, we would strongly advise company owners to take professional advice in relation to when purchases are made to ensure maximum availability of the relief."

DSH'S STEPHEN METCALFE: Annual Investment Allowance advice

Warners Solicitors welcomes back commercial specialist

SOUTH East-based law firm Warners Solicitors announces that Russell Brinkhurst is returning to the firm as an associate solicitor.

Russell started his career at Warners in 2005 and has decided to re-join after a short spell working for a firm in Sussex.

Russell has eight years' experience as a solicitor and specialises in corporate and commercial work. During his career he has advised on a number of complex transactions including: advising the majority shareholders of a niche software development business in connection with a buy out of investor shareholders; acting for a retailer on the sale of one of its stores for £3 million; and was instructed by administrators to act on their behalf in connection with the administration sale of a specialist vehicle manufacturing business in the North East of England.

Jonathan Roberts, head of the corporate team at Warners, said: "We are delighted to welcome Russell back to the firm.

"Russell's extensive experience, combined with his legal skills and pragmatic approach, further strengthens and compliments the team at Warners.

"Russell is already re-connecting and re-establishing many of the client and professional relationships that he enjoyed when he was previously at the firm."

Warners is a modern and innovative law firm built on a strong heritage. Its lawyers are experts in their respective fields and provide a high quality, responsive service at the right value.

RETURNING: Russell Brinkhurst (right)

They are regularly recognised by the leading legal directories – Chambers UK and Legal 500 – as offering some of the best legal advice in the South East.

More details can be found at www.warners-solicitors.co.uk

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Small business gives its wish-list to the chancellor in time for this year's Budget

AUSTERITY: Public spending is still under scrutiny by the chancellor

SMALL business confidence remains robust ahead of 2015's budget – due to be announced this Wednesday (March 18).

Yet still more needs to be done to help the county's small businesses grow according to the Federation of Small Business (FSB) in Kent.

The FSB is, therefore, hoping for a number of its wishes to be granted when George Osborne takes his place in parliament to deliver his budget.

The group is calling on the chancellor to focus on delivering further supply side reforms, building on initiatives which are already underway.

Bill Fox, Kent and Medway chairman for the federation, said: "The improving outlook for the Kent economy is starting to be felt with low unemployment, increasing wages and general business confidence among our members.

"What we now need is to allow the reforms that have been made to bed in, and to finish the roll out of those reforms still needing to be put into action.

"Key issues for Kent businesses are tax, business rates and broadband – we will be looking for commitment in these important areas."

The most recent FSB Index report - which takes the pulse of the county's small businesses - found that more businesses are starting to increase their headcounts.

That's a positive sign according to Mr Fox, but he would like to see Mr Osborne focus his efforts on one group in particular – young people.

He said: "The FSB believes strongly that investment in quality apprenticeships will lead to increased productivity gains for businesses and the wider economy.

"One of the few areas of concern within the positive picture remains skills. It's crucial that new and existing small firms have appropriately skilled staff and targeted support at a local level to grow their businesses.

"We are eager to see reform of the apprenticeship system completed as soon as possible, with a structure in place that attracts small businesses as much as medium and large businesses to take on apprenticeships.

Reforming business rates, which has proved problematic in the past, is something Mr Fox always wants the chancellor to focus on. Mr Osborne committed to an overhaul of the system in the Autumn Statement, but so far, little has been changed.

Mr Fox said: "The government has recognised the need for urgent reform of the failed business rate system and this budget is an opportunity to publish the details of the structural review announced at Autumn Statement.

"The terms of reference must be of sufficient breadth to drive the fundamental review as promised in 2014. This will allow a review which can finally address the many issues and injustices which make this such a ripe opportunity for meaningful reform."

He said: "We want to see the next government build on current momentum and create conditions which promote further growth and rebalance the economy.

"It is important a new government follows through measures outlined in our business manifesto to provide a stable environment for small firms, with measures built for the long-term to provide the stability businesses require."

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Summer sun likely to shine brightly on the county's tourist industry says Visit Kent

TOURISM body Visit Kent has said it's expecting this summer to prove a scorcher for the county's holiday industry.

Tourism is a crucial industry in Kent, accounting for around 11 per cent of the county's employment. It also contributes a staggering £3.4 billion to Kent's turnover.

Despite the UK economy appearing to have made a partial recovery from 2008's credit crunch, Visit Kent says that the 'staycation' market could still do well.

Staycationing flourished as stretched Brits decided to save their pennies, shunning foreign holidays which were likely to cost more.

Kent was one of the biggest beneficiaries, with a wide range of tourist hotspots, from Canterbury Cathedral to the chocolate box villages of the Weald.

Ruth Wood is the head of research and strategy at Visit Kent. She told KoS that there is still plenty of reason to be optimistic about Kent's tourism trade.

"The main thought from Visit Britain, the national tourism body, is that a lot of people from the domestic market have rediscovered the benefits of taking a staycation in the UK.

"The hope is that now these people have a bit more cash in their pockets, they will actively choose to stay here, rather than going elsewhere for their holiday."

Statistics released by Visit Britain showed that around a quarter of UK residents chose to staycation for their main holiday during 2014. Over 15 per cent decided to take a second holiday in the UK as well, adding to the business boost.

Despite this, UK staycationing rates are significantly lower than other parts of Europe.

From the 28 EU member countries an average of 40 per cent of tourism was classed as staycationing last year – that could indicate the UK market has room to grow.

Kent could benefit disproportionately from people choosing to remain in the UK, as according to research from Visit England, holidays in the English countryside and coastal escapes hold the most universal appeal for those wanting to take a break a bit closer to home.

BULLISH: Ruth Wood

It isn't just the staycation market which appears to be doing well for Kent's tourist trade. Trade is coming to Kent from further away as well.

Miss Wood said: "The inbound market is looking extremely healthy at the moment, with strong year-on-year growth.

"Traditional markets like Europe are still coming in droves, but there are also other areas of the world which are choosing to visit as well.

HOTSPOT: Regeneration on Margate's coast could see it relive its heyday

"Emerging markets like China are beginning to really pick up for Kent.

"In fact, we are the third most visited part of the UK by overseas tourists, something which has grown the tourist trade throughout Kent significantly."

Even if the domestic market begins to flounder, those fresh, new emerging markets could offer the chance of continued growth for tourism.

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11.00am ~ Inheritance Tax & Pensions ~ Mike Heelan TEP Dip Pfs & Duncan Maw Bsc Hons F.S.I. CeFa CeMap

Midday ~ Care fees & Trusts ~ Gateley LLP

2.00pm ~ Probate ~ Kings Court Trust

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As a response to client feedback we are hosting an event which we are calling the "Later Life Estate Planning Event". The event will be of particular benefit to homeowners who are aged 60 or over. Due to expected high demand, we will have to limit attendance to only those who have registered in advance. Industry experts will be present to discuss matters most important to you, including:

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- The difference between owning your property as "joint tenants" and "tenants in common"
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- Using a trust to take the family home out of the potentially very lengthy probate (Estate Administration) process
- Protecting the family home from an estranged child who might consider making a claim against the provisions in your Will under the Inheritance (Provision for Family and Dependants) Act 1975
- Planning for Care Fees
- Interpretation of "Charging for Residential Accommodation Guide" (CRAG)
- Lease Plans for "buy to let" landlords to reduce Inheritance Tax liability
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The 10th Monaco Historic Grand Prix & Portofino

by Rail • 9th & 10th May, 2016

8 days semi-all-inclusive, £**1049**pp • Quote: GP5-KOS

The bi-annual Monaco Historic Grand Prix, celebrating its 10th edition in 2016, is run on the famous Formula 1 course with rare and famous Grand Prix cars dating from the 1940s to 1980s. In contrast to its modern day counterpart, held two weeks later, the Grand Prix de Monaco Historique is far more relaxed, friendlier and accessible. You can get close to cars and drivers on a stroll through the paddock – definitely off limits at the F1 GP - and you'll have plenty of elbow room in the grandstand too – we include a seated ticket on final race day. You will also enjoy visits to Portofino and Dolceacqua.

INCLUDED: Escorted throughout • Champagne Check-in at London St Pancras • Return rail travel from London St Pancras (from Ebbsfleet on request) to Nice • 1 night hotel B&B in Paris or Lille outbound • 6 nights in Diano Marina with buffet breakfasts & dinners and free drinks 6pm to 11pm every night - local brands of beer, wine & spirits • Grandstand seated ticket for Historic Grand Prix Race day • All Excursions • Transfers abroad

Departures: 13 April, 30 May, 17 September, 1 October, 2015

Riviera of Flowers, Monaco & Portofino

by Rail - afternoon departures - April to October, 2015

8 days semi-all-inclusive, from £**849**pp • Quote: RF-KOS

On this super holiday you'll take in the French and Italian Rivieras. You'll visit Monaco, playground for the rich and famous; the medieval village of Eze; Portofino, famous for its picturesque harbour plus Dolceacqua, a charming village at the foot of the Rebuffao mountains. You'll also enjoy free drinks every night at your hotel in the popular resort of Diano Marina.

INCLUDED: Escorted throughout • Champagne Check-in at London St Pancras • Return rail travel from St Pancras to Nice (from Ebbsfleet on request) • 1 night hotel B&B in Paris or Lille • 6 nights in Diano Marina or similar - half-board plus selected free drinks 6pm to 11pm every night • All Excursions • Transfers abroad

Rapallo, Portofino & Cinque Terre

by Rail - 6 June, 11, 17 & 29 September, 2015

8 days semi-all-inclusive, from £**899**pp • Quote: RP-KOS

Liguria is certainly one of the most beautiful and popular regions in Italy. We stay in the seaside town of Rapallo, home to many affluent Italians and visit the world heritage Cinque Terre (Five Lands), the famous Tuscan cities of Pisa and Lucca; and idyllic Portofino by boat.

INCLUDED: Escorted throughout • Return rail travel from London St Pancras (from Ebbsfleet on request) to Nice • 1 night hotel B&B in Nice • 6 nights half-board accommodation in Rapallo with free drinks from 6pm to 10pm every night • All excursions • Transfers abroad

Braemar Gathering & Highland Steam

by Rail - 3 September, 2015

6 days half board, £**689**pp • Quote: GB9-KOS

Since 1848 the world-famous Braemar Gathering has been regularly attended by the reigning Monarch (as the Chieftain of the gathering) and members of the Royal Family. We will visit the gathering and tour the Trossachs - gateway to the Highlands; cruise on Loch Katrine and ride the Strathspey Steam Railway through gorgeous Highland scenery.

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Note: Attendance by the Queen and Prince Charles not guaranteed

Secret Citadelle to Christmas Markets River Cruise

by Rail - 24 November, 2015

5 days semi-all-inclusive, from £**529**pp • Quote: TC11-1-KOS

Join us for a relaxing river cruise starting in the picturesque town of Dinant, located on the Meuse River and home to an impressive citadel. Sailing past scenic landscapes onto Namur, with its beautiful 17th and 18th-century architecture. We visit two exceptional Christmas Markets: Aachen in Germany, with a visit to the Lindt Chocolate Factory Outlet and Valkenburg in Holland, with its unique Christmas Caves. We also visit Brussels, the Belgian capital with its famous Christmas market and Grand Place.

INCLUDED: Escorted throughout • Return rail travel from London St Pancras (from Ebbsfleet on request) to Brussels • 4 nights full board on the mps Princess sharing a twin outside rear cabin on Main Deck - upgrades available • Beer, wine, & soft drinks served at lunch & dinner and from 6pm to midnight at the bar • Entertainment • Transfers abroad

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driving

By Steve Loader
editorial@kosmedia.co.uk

DILEMMA: The C1 (above) is a striking little runabout, while the C4 Cactus (inset) underlines Citroën's 'people's champion' heritage, while the DS3 (below) has created a happy problem for the French marque

Citroën – a brand of two halves

Endearing French marque finally recognizes it's trying too hard to please two groups of consumers, and divorces DS sub-brand, writes **Steve Loader**...

IT'S a dilemma that Citroën has grappled with for more than half a century.

It began in the 1950s when the innovative French marque was known for making a car for the people – the eccentric but endearing 2CV – and another for the posh, the elegant DS.

This schizophrenia ebbed and flowed over intervening years, but re-emerged with the modern day success of the DS premium badge, championed by the DS3 – the BMW MINI's biggest rival in the manbag/handbag motor sector.

The Citroën brand proper also launched the C4 Cactus model last year; not quite a belated 2CV replacement, but an eye-catching yet hugely practical car offering fantastic value for money.

So, in what now seems an obvious move, Citroën and DS will start to part company: it might take many years yet, but Citroën will pursue its value for money path, slotting in below sister brand Peugeot's mainstream/premium market position, while DS will be the overall group's flagship brand – an upmarket position it already enjoys in markets like China.

In the UK, I understand this will ultimately mean separate dealerships too.

For now though, the value and verve still exists under the one roof with Citroën's stars being the aforementioned Cactus, the new C1 city car and the brilliant Picasso MPV sub-brand, notably the semi-SUV C3 and the futuristic C4 Picasso five and seven-seat models.

Meanwhile, the DS3 continues its phenomenal success story, with a further chapter opened by the Cabrio variant – the only five-seat opentop model in the supermini sector.

Attempts to create bigger stablemates with similar appeal have been less successful: the VW Golf-size DS4 is rather anonymous, while the gorgeous looking DS5 was marred by iron hard un-Citroën-like suspension – a failing Citroën now says it has put right. We hope to report first hand on that soon.

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Fiat's bigger but more cuddly Panda

The Fiat holdall's looks make it a Marmite motor but no other car can match this line-up for versatile value, writes **Steve Loader...**

FIAT'S Panda story began in 1980, but the third generation car is a far cry from the original.

It remains a budget bargain (from £9,095), but has lost the utilitarian look of the slab-sided original or, indeed, the 2004 to12 car.

It has a well-built and funky interior, and handles tidily despite tall, capacious and practical dimensions, delivering good leg and headroom for five. Parking is eased by a button to change the weight of the steering.

The feeling of space is even more impressive, considering the wheel-base is the same as before and overall dimensions have increased only marginally.

Despite the cuddlier look though, it remains a Marmite motor; you either love or hate the styling.

It has a good choice of engines, though the 85bhp 0.9-litre TwinAir petrol engine (from £11,095) tested here is the standout candidate.

It's a twin-cylinder turbocharged unit, offering performance and economy, as required. Low emissions bring road tax exemption and sensible driving might get near the official combined consumption figure of 67.3mpg.

But the turbocharger can turn it into a lively little beast and it's tempting to exploit the light-changing five-speed gearbox, harming that exceptional mpg figure.

Buyers on a tight budget may be tempted instead by the entry level 69bhp 1.2-litre petrol unit. It accelerates modestly and is the least fuel-efficient option (54.3mpg combined), but tried and tested.

The frugal (72.4mpg combined) 75bhp 1.3 Multijet diesel might also be a good call, but adds up to 100 kilos more than the petrol versions, affecting the Panda's nimbleness and your wallet with prices from £11,295.

But that's not all the choice available in the Panda line-up because you must also decide whether you want off-roading ability or even something in between – Fiat has upheld a tradition dating from the first Panda by offering 4x4.

This comes in two forms: the high-riding 4x4 itself (from £14,295) with suitable 'rufty-tufty' add-on protection, and the ultimate Panda off-roader, the Cross (from £15,945) – rarely can such go anywhere ability have been crammed into such a small package.

And the middle course is the Panda Trekking (from £12,795) with front-wheel drive and a special traction control for exiting most tricky predicaments.

Finally, I had anecdotal proof of Panda reliability while holidaying in Kefalonia a few years ago. Local roads were as flaky as the Greek economy now clearly is, yet my little Daihatsu Charade hire car coped well and I sang its praises to the Brit running the hire car site, who responded: "Yeah, Japanese stuff is good, but Fiat Pandas are our favourite – they go on forever."

Praise indeed.

Fiat Panda Lounge TwinAir

Price:	from £11,595
Driving appeal:	★★★★★
Image:	★★★★
Space:	★★★★★
Value:	★★★★★
Running costs:	★★★★
How green?:	★★★★★
Best rival:	VW Up five-door

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*Prices & offers apply to retail sales of qualifying Citroën models ordered & delivered 01/01-31/03/15 & include VAT, delivery to dealer & number plates, Government Registration Fee & 12 months' graduated vehicle excise duty. Black/metallic/pearlescent paint optional at extra cost. Elect 4 Personal Lease rentals shown apply to New Citroën C4 Cactus PureTech 82 manual Feel - New Citroën C4 Cactus BlueHDi 100 manual Touch respectively. Model(s) shown New Citroën C4 Cactus PureTech 82 manual Flair from £195 per month. One significant advance rental will be required, which varies by model, followed by 34 monthly rentals at the rates shown & a significant optional final rental. Excess mileage charges may apply if the agreed annual mileage is exceeded. Payment of the optional final rental extends the rental term (this does not transfer title of the vehicle) & requires an annual rental equivalent to one months' rental. Finance subject to status. Written quotations available on request from Citroën Financial Services, Quadrant House, Princess Way, Redhill, Surrey, RH1 1QA, UK. Over 18s only. A guarantee may be required. Jarretts Motors Ltd is acting as a credit broker and is not a lender. To finance your purchase/lease we may introduce you to a limited number of lenders. Offers & specification correct at time of going to press from participating Dealers. Terms & conditions apply. Please ask us for details. Subject to stock availability.

Official Government fuel consumption figures (Range): Urban cycle, Extra urban, Combined (litres per 100km/mpg) & CO_2 emissions (g/km); Highest:New Citroën C4 Cactus PureTech 110 S&S manual Feel 5.8/48.7, 4/70.6, 4.7/60.1, 107. Lowest:New Citroën C4 Cactus BlueHDi 100 manual Touch 3.5/80.7, 2.9/97.4, 3.1/91.1, 82. MPG figures are achieved under official EU test conditions, intended as a guide for comparative purposes only, and may not reflect actual on-the-road driving conditions.

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Tunbridge Wells Hyundai 01892 520026
Dowding Way, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN2 3UY www.kenthyundai.co.uk

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1-9 High Street, Chatham ME4 4EN www.kenthyundai.co.uk

5 YEAR Mileage Warranty

Fuel consumption in MPG (l/100km) for New Generation i20 range: Urban 30.7 (9.2) – 80.7 (3.5), Extra Urban 53.3 (5.3) – 94.2 (3.0), Combined 42.2 (6.7) – 88.3 (3.2), CO_2 Emissions 155–84g/km.
Fuel consumption: figures shown are based on official EU test figures. These are to be used as a guide for comparative purposes and may not reflect all driving results.
YOU WILL NOT OWN THE VEHICLE UNTIL ALL PAYMENTS ARE MADE. WE ARE A CREDIT BROKER (NOT A LENDER). WE CAN INTRODUCE YOU TO A LIMITED NUMBER OF CAREFULLY SELECTED FINANCE PROVIDERS. WE MAY RECEIVE A COMMISSION FROM THEM FOR THE INTRODUCTION. 5.9% APR Representative available on Personal Contract Purchase over 25, 31 and 37 month term or Conditional Sale over 12, 24 or 36 month term. Ts & Cs apply. Finance subject to status. Available between 22nd January and 31st March 2015, inclusive. Applicants must be 18 or over. Guarantee / Indemnity may be required. Hyundai Motor Finance RH1 1SR. Model shown: New Generation i20 Premium SE at £14,725 with metallic paint at £495 extra.

THE NEW SCHOOL AT WEST HEATH SEVENOAKS

"Rebuilding lives through education"

Principal & Chief Executive:
Mrs Christina Wells (BA Hons.)

The New School at West Heath works towards helping students develop life skills and enjoy social activities. As a team we share a real desire to set a new, even higher standard of care in education and you can help us achieve this goal. The School has approval status from the Department of Children, School and Families and has an excellent rapport with both parents and the Local Authorities.

Due to our School's continuing development plan, vacancies have arisen through progression and retirement and therefore we wish to recruit the following:-

Head of Expressive Arts Faculty
Excellent leadership with vision, drive and energy

Head of Performing Arts
Specialist subject knowledge and skills to teach effectively up to GCSE

Head of Education Offsite (EOS)
Experience of managing teams and networking with community organisations

Teaching Assistants – Supporting Students at College
Supporting students individually or in groups at local colleges

Teaching Assistants – Supporting Students in School
Supporting KS3/4/5 in school in their academic, personal and social development

Support Worker
Supporting and safeguarding the welfare of our weekly residential students

Application form, Job Description and for further details about our school please visit our website **www.westheathschool.com** or contact Lynne McGrath on **01732 460553** or email **lynnemcgrath@westheathschool.com**

The successful candidates will be required to apply for the enhanced DBS check and subscribe to the updating service.

Closing date for applications 23 March 2015

The New School at West Heath is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young adults and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

Spencer Private Hospitals are two hospitals situated in East Kent. The larger of the two hospitals is a 22 bed independent hospital situated at the QEQM Hospital in Margate, whilst the second hospital is a 4 bed independent hospital based at the William Harvey Hospital in Ashford. Both hospitals have a reputation for providing excellent medical and surgical facilities supported by Specialist Consultants, Specialist Nurses and Physiotherapists. We have state of the art diagnostic equipment and exceptionally high standards of nursing care.

An exciting period of growth has resulted in an expansion of our theatre operating capacity, in a new state of the art Vanguard Theatre at Margate. This expansion means we urgently seek the following highly skilled and expert theatre personnel, available for daytime shifts.

If you are adaptable and experienced then we would very much like to hear from you. We can also offer an extensive training and competency program in conjunction with East Kent Hospitals University Foundation Trust Theatre department offering many specialities.

Theatre / Recovery / Anaesthetics OD Practitioners
Full Time. Hours: 37.5 per week
Salary: Dependant on experience

Qualifications and Experience
- Registered Nurse or Operating Department Practitioner
- Relevant experience working in a theatre Department
- Knowledge of research and evidence-based practice
- Ability to assess, plan and evaluate patient care

Theatre Scrub Practitioners
Full Time. Hours: 37.5 per week
Salary: Dependant on experience

Qualifications and Experience
- Registered Nurse or Operating Department Practitioner
- Relevant experience working in a Theatre Department
- Knowledge of research and evidence-based practice
- Ability to assess, plan and evaluate patient care

Closing date: 31/03/2015

To discuss these opportunities, or to arrange an informal visit, please contact:
Vicky Smith, Quality Assurance Lead Nurse on 07477 823969

We regret that CVs are not accepted for any of our roles, for an application pack please visit: **www.spencerprivatehospitals.com/blog/vanguard**

Alternatively, please contact Justine Whittle, HR Assistant, Telephone 01304 245943
E-Mail: recruitment@spencerhospitals.com

Spencer Private Hospitals is an equal opportunity employer. This position is subject to a Disclosure and Barring check.

Working for Spencer Private Hospitals:

Spencer Private Hospitals recognise and value all of their staff and are committed to developing a well-trained and flexible workforce. As an Investors in People accredited organisation, you can expect a generous holiday allowance, increasing with length of service, company contribution pension scheme, childcare vouchers, my work offers scheme, family and friends discounts on Physiotherapy and Health Screening services as well as uniform and free onsite parking.

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Westlands SCHOOL

Westlands Avenue, Sittingbourne, Kent. ME10 1PF
A member of Swale Academies Trust

TRAINEE SCIENCE TECHNICIAN

Required as soon as possible
35 hours per week, term time only
Salary starting at £14,526 - £16,468 pa (pro-rata) (equal to £11,330 - £12,845)

We seek to appoint a trainee Science Technician to join our team of staff who are responsible for providing technical support in science subjects (KS3, KS4, A Level, BTEC) and to co-ordinate the use of practical resources and facilities in the Science Department.

The successful candidate will receive in-house and external training to support their development in becoming fully effective in this role. Previous experience is not required, but an interest in Science, a willingness to learn and a team spirit is essential.

Duties will include:
- running trials of experiments prior to classes and then demonstrating techniques for experiments;
- preparing equipment and chemicals before lessons – from test tubes to microscopes;
- maintaining and repairing equipment and laboratory apparatus;
- ensuring that equipment is properly cleaned and that chemicals and other materials are appropriately stored;
- ensuring that all health and safety procedures are understood and followed correctly;

Ofsted 2012
Achievement is outstanding
Teaching is outstanding
Behaviour is outstanding
Leadership is outstanding

Recruitment packs are available from Westlands School or online (www.swaleacademiestrust.org.uk). Please note, we cannot accept CVs without an application form. Closing date: 25 March 2015 (noon).

Swale Academies Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.
This post is subject to an enhanced DBS check

Contact Details Tel: 01795 477475 - Fax: 01795 479461 - Email swa@westlands.kent.sch.uk
Trust Principal: Mr J Whitcombe MA - Headteacher: Mr S Cox MA
Swale Academies Trust Company No 7344732
Registered Office: Ashdown House, Johnson Road, Sittingbourne, Kent ME10 1JS

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It's jobs for Kent

Abbey Court School

"We grow people"

Abbey Court School provides a stimulating, challenging and safe learning environment where pupils and staff efforts, work and achievement are celebrated.

We are currently looking for a

TEACHING ASSISTANT

to join and enhance our large and expanding, high calibre team.
Medway Scale, Grade D2
£15,523 - £19,742 pro-rata + SEN Allowance (£1,215)

Are you committed, motivated and enthusiastic?
Can you make a difference?
If so, share your talents and expertise with us.

Abbey Court is located on 2 sites; Rainham (Nursery and Primary) and Strood (Secondary and Further Education), and caters for pupils aged 3-19 with Severe Learning Difficulties. Working hours are 32.5 p/w (8.45am – 3.45pm), term time only.
Comprehensive training and induction will be provided.

Only those with childcare experience, or relevant childcare qualifications should apply.

Due to the conditions and complex needs of the pupils at Abbey Court School, continuity and consistency of support is paramount and therefore candidates for all positions will need to commit to the full working hours of the post.

This School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. Any offer of appointment for post is subject to a satisfactory Criminal Record Bureau Disclosure.

For an application pack, please write to/telephone (stating the role for which you are applying):
Mrs Linda Taylor, Abbey Court School, Rede Court Road, Strood, Kent. ME2 3SP (01634 338236)

Please note CV's will NOT be accepted.

Closing date: 20.3.15

Spencer Private Hospitals are two hospitals situated in East Kent. The larger of the two hospitals is a 22 bed independent hospital situated at the QEQM Hospital in Margate, whilst the second hospital is a 4 bed independent hospital based at the William Harvey Hospital in Ashford. Both hospitals have a reputation for providing excellent medical and surgical facilities supported by Specialist Consultants, Specialist Nurses and Physiotherapists. We have state of the art diagnostic equipment and exceptionally high standards of nursing care.

An exciting period of growth has resulted in an expansion of our theatre operating capacity, in a new state of the art Vanguard Theatre at Margate. This expansion means we urgently seek the following highly skilled and expert theatre personnel, available for daytime shifts.

If you are adaptable and experienced then we would very much like to hear from you. We can also offer an extensive training and competency program in conjunction with East Kent Hospitals University Foundation Trust Theatre department offering many specialities.

Deputy Theatre Liaison Manager
Full time, 37.5 hours per week
Salary: £34k – 38k per annum

Qualifications and Experience:
- Registered Nurse or Operating Department Practitioner
- Five years relevant experience in theatre
- Evidence of Continual Professional Development
- Experience of managing a team
- Sound knowledge of Clinical Governance and Risk Management
- A working knowledge of CQC regulations and requirements
- Ability to manage a theatre department

Endoscopy Practitioners (RGN/ODP)
Full time, 37.5 hours per week
Salary: £25,000 per annum
Hours will include evenings and weekends.
- Registered Nurse or Operating Department Practitioner
- Relevant experience working in an Endoscopy Unit
- Knowledge of research and evidence-based practice
- Experienced in Recovery and Anaesthetics
- Skilled in scope cleaning and decontamination processes
- Able to assist in therapeutic procedures
- Data collection ICT skills
- Ability to assess, plan and evaluate patient care

Closing date: 31/03/2015

To discuss these opportunities, or to arrange an informal visit, please contact:
Vicky Smith, Quality Assurance Lead Nurse on 07477 823969

We regret that CVs are not accepted for any of our roles, for an application pack please visit: **www.spencerprivatehospitals.com/blog/vanguard**

Alternatively, please contact Justine Whittle, HR Assistant, Telephone 01304 245943
E-Mail: recruitment@spencerhospitals.com

Spencer Private Hospitals is an equal opportunity employer. This position is subject to a Disclosure and Barring check.

Working for Spencer Private Hospitals:

Spencer Private Hospitals recognise and value all of their staff and are committed to developing a well-trained and flexible workforce. As an Investors in People accredited organisation, you can expect a generous holiday allowance, increasing with length of service, company contribution pension scheme, childcare vouchers, my work offers scheme, family and friends discounts on Physiotherapy and Health Screening services as well as uniform and free onsite parking.

Spencer PRIVATE HOSPITALS

PLEASE MENTION THIS PAPER WHEN REPLYING TO THESE ADVERTISEMENTS

PLANNING

Folkestone Hythe & Romney Marsh Shepway District Council

THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE) (ENGLAND) ORDER 2010

The following applications have been submitted for consideration by the Council:

Y15/0176/SH+ - Waitrose Prospect Road Hythe Kent CT21 5NH - Installation of an external seating area and associated external alterations.

Y15/0158/SH - Christchurch Tower Sandgate Road Folkestone Kent - Erection of a memorial and two information boards.

Y15/0178/SH - 12 Jointon Road Folkestone Kent CT20 2RG - Demolition of rear extension and conversion of existing building to form 2 self-contained dwellings and construction of two blocks to the rear garden to form 6 flats.

Y15/0206/SH# - Orchard Cottage Church Road New Romney Kent TN28 8EX - Erection of a two storey side extension and a single storey rear extension following demolition of existing conservatory, erection of a hipped roof to the front elevation to replace existing flat roof, installation of a first floor side window with juliet balcony and enlargement to existing hardstanding to create additional off-street parking.

Y15/0159/SH - Mount Calm 24 - 26 Earls Avenue Folkestone Kent CT20 2HE - Change of use and conversion from residential care home (Class C2) to eleven self contained flats (Class C3).

Y15/0187/SH - Springfield Dental Street Hythe Kent CT21 5LH - Works to trees situated within a conservation area comprising: 3 metre reduction in height of a group of Hollies (T1); one Ginkgo Biloba (T4); one Goat Willow (T5) and two Holm Oaks (T6 and T7); reduction back to previous pruning points of one large unidentified shrub (T2) and crown reduction of one Holm Oak (T3) comprising of 3 metre reduction in height and 2.5 metre reduction of laterals

Y15/0135/SH - 9A Defiant Close Hawkinge Folkestone Kent CT18 7SU - Section 73 application to vary condition 11 of planning permission Y10/0739/SH in order to allow the use of the ground floor unit as a veterinary surgery (Class D1)

Y15/0193/SH#* - The Seahorse 109 - 111 Coast Drive Greatstone New Romney Kent - Change of use and conversion of public house to a residential dwelling house (Resubmission of Y14/0926/SH).

Representations can be made in writing either on line on the Council's website, by email to planning@shepway.gov.uk or in writing to the Head of Planning and Environmental Health, Shepway District Council, Civic Centre, Castle Hill Avenue, Folkestone, Kent, CT20 2QY. Please always quote the application reference number. Comments should be made in writing within 21 days from the date of publication. Please note that any representations received will be publically viewable on the Council's website.

Some applications can be viewed at other locations in addition to the Civic Centre, Folkestone. The applications are marked as follows:

- The One Stop Shop, Magpies, Church Approach, New Romney

\+ - Hythe Town Council Offices, Stade Street, Hythe

The applications marked (*) do not accord with the provisions of the development plan in force in the area in which the land to which the application relates is situated.

Note: This is not a full list of applications received. All planning applications can be viewed and comments made online at http://searchplanapps.shepway.gov.uk/online-applications/.

C Lewis, Head of Planning and Environmental Health
Shepway District Council

Folkestone Hythe & Romney Marsh Shepway District Council

41630939 NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, Shepway District Council has set the following amounts as the amounts of Council Tax for the year 2015/16 for each of the categories of dwelling shown below:

	Valuation Bands							
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Parish								
FOLKESTONE								
Folkestone	1076.43	1255.84	1435.24	1614.65	1973.46	2332.27	2691.08	3229.30
Sandgate	1070.28	1248.66	1427.04	1605.42	1962.18	2318.94	2675.70	3210.84
HYTHE	1057.33	1233.55	1409.77	1585.99	1938.43	2290.87	2643.32	3171.98
LYDD	1064.17	1241.53	1418.89	1596.25	1950.97	2305.69	2660.42	3192.50
NEW ROMNEY	1060.73	1237.52	1414.31	1591.10	1944.68	2298.26	2651.83	3182.20
ELHAM								
Acrise	1023.85	1194.49	1365.13	1535.77	1877.05	2218.33	2559.62	3071.54
Elham	1038.42	1211.49	1384.56	1557.63	1903.77	2249.91	2596.05	3115.26
Elmsted	1029.29	1200.83	1372.38	1543.93	1887.03	2230.12	2573.22	3087.86
Hawkinge	1052.79	1228.26	1403.72	1579.19	1930.12	2281.05	2631.98	3158.38
Lyminge	1043.95	1217.94	1391.93	1565.92	1913.90	2261.88	2609.87	3131.84
Lympne	1039.03	1212.21	1385.38	1558.55	1904.89	2251.24	2597.58	3117.10
Monks Horton	1029.45	1201.03	1372.60	1544.18	1887.33	2230.48	2573.63	3088.36
Newington	1041.49	1215.08	1388.66	1562.24	1909.40	2256.57	2603.73	3124.48
Paddlesworth	1031.15	1203.00	1374.86	1546.72	1890.44	2234.15	2577.87	3093.44
Postling	1035.25	1207.80	1380.34	1552.88	1897.96	2243.05	2588.13	3105.76
Saltwood	1038.87	1212.02	1385.16	1558.31	1904.60	2250.89	2597.18	3116.62
Sellindge	1056.93	1233.09	1409.24	1585.40	1937.71	2290.02	2642.33	3170.80
Stanford	1041.97	1215.63	1389.29	1562.95	1910.27	2257.59	2604.92	3125.90
Stelling Minnis	1035.77	1208.39	1381.02	1553.65	1898.91	2244.16	2589.42	3107.30
Stowting	1032.67	1204.78	1376.89	1549.00	1893.22	2237.44	2581.67	3098.00
Swingfield	1049.52	1224.44	1399.36	1574.28	1924.12	2273.96	2623.80	3148.56
ROMNEY MARSH -								
Brenzett	1050.47	1225.55	1400.63	1575.71	1925.87	2276.03	2626.18	3151.42
Brookland	1066.61	1244.38	1422.15	1599.92	1955.46	2311.00	2666.53	3199.84
Burmarsh	1045.99	1220.33	1394.66	1568.99	1917.65	2266.32	2614.98	3137.98
Dymchurch	1045.21	1219.41	1393.61	1567.81	1916.21	2264.61	2613.02	3135.62
Ivychurch	1055.95	1231.95	1407.94	1583.93	1935.91	2287.90	2639.88	3167.86
Newchurch	1043.23	1217.10	1390.97	1564.84	1912.58	2260.32	2608.07	3129.68
Old Romney	1023.06	1193.57	1364.08	1534.59	1875.61	2216.63	2557.65	3069.18
St Mary in the Marsh	1039.23	1212.44	1385.64	1558.85	1905.26	2251.67	2598.08	3117.70
Snargate	1023.06	1193.57	1364.08	1534.59	1875.61	2216.63	2557.65	3069.18

MARINE AND COASTAL ACCESS ACT 2009 BOTTOM TOWED FISHING GEAR (PROHIBITED AREAS) BYELAW

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN: The Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority intends to apply to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for confirmation of a Bottom Towed Fishing Gear (Prohibited Areas) Byelaw to prohibit the use of bottom towed fishing gear in specified areas to protect the designated features of those areas and therefore prevent damage to or deterioration of the sites

During the period of 28 days from the date of the publication of this Notice a copy of the Byelaw and Impact Assessment will be deposited at the offices of the applicant, at the address given below and at www.kentandessex-ifca.gov.uk.

Objections or representations concerning this notification should be made within 28 days of the date of this notice to both addresses given below:

Marine Conservation and Enforcement Team
Marine Management Organisation
Lancaster House
Hampshire Court
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE4 7YH

or ifcabyelaws@marinemanagement.org.uk

Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
Paragon House
Albert Street
Ramsgate
Kent
CT11 9HD

or info@kentandessex-ifca.gov.uk

To place your **PUBLIC NOTICE** in this newspaper call the team on

01233 653 461

who will be happy to help and advise you.

ARCHANT

Folkestone Hythe & Romney Marsh Shepway District Council

SECTION 70 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) ACT 1976

Fees for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Licences
Fees for Private Hire Vehicle Operators Licences

Shepway District Council proposes to vary the fees charged for:

Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Licences to the rate of **£273.00** per annum. Private Hire Vehicle Operator Licence per vehicle to the rate of **£63.00** per annum. It is intended that the changes are to be effective from **12 April 2015.**

A copy of this Notice will be available for inspection at the Council's Offices during normal office hours.

Any person wishing to make representations about these proposals should do so in writing giving reasons for so doing. Representations should reach the undersigned within 28 days from the date of this Notice.

Dated: 15 March 2015

Licensing Manager
Shepway District Council
Castle Hill Avenue
Folkestone
Kent CT20 2QY

LEGAL AND PUBLIC NOTICES

Public Notice

Southborough Town Council intends to transfer a plot of open public space land consisting of recreation ground, playing fields and informal open space of approximately 3.8 acres to Kent County Council for use towards the mixed use Southborough Hub development.

The land has pedestrian access from the A26 London Road and links to the Ridgewaye.

For further details please contact the Town Clerk at brenda.wickens@southboroughcouncil.co.uk

Vigo Parish Council
Tree works and maintenance

The Parish of Vigo is situated at the top of the North Downs escarpment in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It has large areas of woodland and amenity trees all of which are covered by Tree Preservation Orders.

The Parish Council wishes to set up a panel of preferred contractors for the maintenance, (both general and preventative), of this woodland environment.

If you or your business would like to be considered for this panel please contact the Parish Clerk by 30th March 2015.

Email: vigoparishcouncil@talktalkbusiness.net

Telephone: 01732 823337.

Post: Vigo Parish Council, Vigo Village Hall, The Bay, Vigo, Gravesend, Kent DA13 0TD.

Goods Vehicle
Operator's Licence

Mr Christopher Porcas and Mrs Sarah Porcas trading as Forestrall Limited of The Old Wood Yard, Watling Street, Bean, Dartford DA2 8AH is applying for a licence to use The Old Wood Yard, Watling Street, Bean, Dartford DA2 8AH as an operating centre for 5 goods vehicles and 0 trailers.

Owners or occupiers of land (including buildings) near the operating centre(s) who believe that their use or enjoyment of that land would be affected, should make written representations to the Traffic Commissioner at Hillcrest House, 386 Harehills Lane, Leeds, LS9 6NF, stating their reasons, within 21 days of this notice. Representors must at the same time send a copy of their representations to the applicant at the address given at the top of this notice. A Guide to Making Representations is available from the Traffic Commissioner's office.

Fleet focus on last promotion push

Ebbsfleet know they have to perform in all their games now

STONEBRIDGE: It's do or die time for Fleet in the final stages of the season

Pictures: ARCHANT

Football

By Jamie Weir
Jamie.Weir@archant.co.uk

EBBSFLEET United are focused on finishing their season with a flourish, according to defender Kelvin Langmead.

The 29-year-old Fleet player - who signed from Northampton - says that the team are performing under the pressure in the 'win or bust phase'.

The Fleet's 2-1 win over Bromley last week is a good example of the squad's attitude according to Langmead.

He said: "We had to win that one to keep the season alive. So, definitely, that was the feeling going into the game and there will be that feeling going into every game now until the end of the season.

"It's now a case of building off the Bromley result."

That's a sentiment which is echoed by Fleet boss Jamie Day, who signed with the team from neighbours Welling earlier this season. He's seen a revival in the fortunes of the Fleet, but knows that at this stage in the season, it's all to play for.

Day said: "The lads know they can't afford slip-ups. We still have teams around us to play so the boys are fully prepared and I know they will give their all in each game. When we play the struggling teams, they might be a bit more patient, so we have to try and break them down and show restraint and patience ourselves."

Speaking about the team's victory over their close rivals last weekend, Day said the team had to dig deep to take the victory, but that Bromley's strategy had helped the Fleet. The opponents and league leaders, said Day, had shown their arrogance.

He said: "Bromley came out and went for us because they felt the odds were good they could outplay us and sometimes as it did last week it works in our favour. Not all teams are going to do that."

With just eight games left in the season for Ebbsfleet, Day and his squad know that the pressure to perform in all of them is growing.

Langmead said that he's been enjoying the challenge of staying consistent during his performances. He transferred to the Fleet after spending most of his career in the Football League.

He said: "I'm still learning all the time. Each game throws you different challenges. In the Football League I knew all the teams and the way they played. Whereas each week now, that isn't the case. It's all new."

Former cricket academy star returns to Kent

MAIDSTONE born all-rounder, Matt Coles, will be coming back to the Spitfire Ground St Lawrence after signing to play for Kent County Cricket Club.

The 24-year-old left Kent in 2013, signing a deal for Hamshire despite his home county's attempts to keep him.

He left under a cloud following his dismissal from an England Lions tour down under for 'unprofessional conduct'.

His return to Kent was secured earlier this week, when he inked the deal with his home county after Hampshire released him from his contract.

The former Kent Cricket Academy graduate began his career with Kent, making his county debut for the team in 2009.

COLES: The all-rounder has decided to return to his home county

Thought of as one of the best and brightest young stars of the future, it was a disappointment for the club when he left. The club says that his return will give them more team options ahead of the new season.

Talking about his return to the team, Coles said: "I am delighted to be back at Kent.

"I am looking forward to joining a talented group of lads and making a real go of my second spell here.

"To come through the age groups to play for your home county was a dream come true.

"I can't wait to get started and rekindle my love for the club."

Kent captain Rob Key was happy Coles had returned to Kent.

He said: "Matt is a cricketer with undoubted potential with both bat and ball.

"It's fantastic that he has returned to the county that brought him up through the youth system."

NTW

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CHARITY: Fabian Cowdrey, Joe Denly and Sam Billings in the new shirt

Cricket club supports Battle of Britain trust

Kent County Cricket Club announce a new partnership with the Battle of Britain Memorial Trust today (March 15).

The trust's name will appear on the collar of the team's 2015 NatWest T20 Blast shirt to mark the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Britain.

The charity - which is currently raising money for a Memorial to the Few at Capel-le-Ferne - will benefit from the partnership with a donation from every shirt sold going to the trust. It will become one of the county club's charities of the year for 2015.

Kent all-rounder Darren Stevens had an input into the design and said: "It's great to see the club commemorate the anniversary of the Battle of Britain with a limited edition kit."

The president of the Battle of Britain Memorial Trust, Air Chief Marshal Sir Michael Graydon GCB CBE, said the charity was "absolutely delighted" with the support from both Kent Cricket and Shepherd Neame.

Maidstone celebrate great season so far

MAIDSTONE RFC have bounced back after a disappointing performance last season, to reach the RFU Intermediate Cup final for the third time in four seasons.

The squad fell at the first hurdle in their challenge for the cup last season, failing against a Guildford squad which eventually became regional champions.

This season, the side has put together an impressive run at the cup, and say they are looking forward to seeing if they can go all of the way.

The team have also been putting in impressive performances in the London and SE Division League.

They currently sit on top of the league table, with recent wins over Tunbridge Wells, Beckenham and Sevenoaks.

The squad have been unbeaten all season, with many of their performances virtual walk-overs that see them win by big margins.

FIGHTING: Maidstone won't be dragged down

The team says that, if everything goes to plan, they could find they are able to shut out closest rivals Medway, by the end of March.

Dynamos look to continue streak

IT'S all to play for for the Invicta Dynamos as they take to the ice against Streatham Redskins today.

The Mos have already locked up enough points to score second place in the NIHL South Division 1, but will want to continue their winning ways and finish the season on a high note.

The Redskins, on the other hand, will be looking for a morale boosting win ahead of their final games which could see them either finish third in the league, or sink to fourth.

The Dynamos have managed to stay unbeaten against the Redskins this season, and are likely to want to stay that way.

The Raiders have the home advantage when the two teams face off at 6.45pm today.

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